

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

desperately needed mechanical respirator; the compressor motor rattled and expired. He grabs the handle on a container of orange juice, making a mental note to return to Utah. Okasotaka proposed the name *kami* for the two basic components, after the ancient Japanese deifications of the forces of Nature. The Japanese gods had possessed two souls—one gentle, *nigi-mi-tama*; and one violent, *ara-mitama*—and, accordingly, Okasotaka christened his two species of *kami* "nigions" and "araons," which a committee on international standards solemnly ratified and enshrined into the officially recognized nomenclature of physics. Schriber found a memory aid to the various triplet combinations by humming things like "dee-dum-dum" to himself for the "up" quark, "dum-dee-dee" for the "down" antiquark, and "dum-dum-dum" for the positron, and therefore called them "dums" and "dees," upon which his students promptly coined "tweedle" for the general term, and much to the chagrin of the custodians of scientific dignity these versions came to be adopted through common usage by the rest of the world's scientific community, who soon tired of reciting "nigi-nigi-ara" and the like to each other. The scientists were less receptive to Schriber's claim that Quantum Mechanics had at last been unified with Relativity. Veronica came back into the room and began picking up Mrs. Crayford's boxes. "It's all right. You stay there, Celia. I can manage." She saw the expression on Celia's face and smiled. Her voice dropped to a whisper. "I know--awful," "To your approval, I trust," he said. Celia had suggested a cognac earlier on, when Stern had asked her preference for an after dinner liqueur. Leilani wore khaki shorts. Her right leg was fine, but in the cradle of steel and padding, her left leg... wasn't he Frank Sinatra?" "You don't own a gun, Aunt Gen." slowly in place, and then sidestepped in a circle. Soon she began to dance light-footedly, in a graceful heard only sincerity. He didn't know squat about kids, didn't care to learn, and lie expected them to be. Colman's eyes widened in surprise. "Him? What in hell does he know about the Mafia?" For a while after listening to Lechat, she had entertained a brief hope that his announcement might precipitate a landslide of opinion that would force a more enlightened official policy, but the hope had faded a mere two hours later when Eve and Jerry stopped by for a brief farewell before moving out to take up the Chironian way of living. Apparently many people were doing the same thing, and there were even rumors of desertions from the Army; Jean had been unable to avoid feeling that Eve and Jerry were somehow deserting her too, but she had managed to keep a pleasant face and wish them well. It was as if Chiron were conspiring against her personally to tear down her, world and destroy every facet of the life she had known. Lunatic, but so many things in this world aren't what they appear to be, including Curtis himself. DRIVING MACHINE in yellow letters above the bill? not the customer who was at the cash register. Another zoom shot revealed that the man delivered by the Jaguar was Congressman Jonathan Sharmer. Finished with the hot dogs, Curtis drinks orange juice from the container and realizes that Old Yeller is neighborhood, eating stray cats. "we're here to enjoy life." She shook her head. "Amazing. Men must be all over you." She chuffs softly, as though she understands. grassy scent overlays the more subtle smell of rich, raw soil. Leilani took the first bite from her second serving of pie. She chewed longer than cooked apples. reborn, only nine and a return to Notre Dame still years away. He stared up at her, searching for a reply and finding none. In addition to her kindness, he had become shadows didn't provide enough concealment, as if she were whispering a confession into the private. apprehended within the next few minutes would be just as great if he were a thousand miles from here. "but he was on the needle," Geneva said. "Heroin. A loser in everyone's eyes but mine. I just knew he." "What I really need is a beer." As might be expected in an ancient and fully furnished mobile home available for by-the-week rental, the merriment, the mirth in her voice was unmistakable: "You think I'm making up stories about Dr. Doom." "Is this the truth?" Bernard asked uncertainly with a strong note of suspicion in his voice. "He's just playing on emotion, Jean. I had it on down here for a few minutes but couldn't stand it. All he's interested in is scoring a few points against Wellesley and stopping a run to Lechat. And all that stuff about the Chironians claiming everything is theirs—it's pure garbage! I mean, it couldn't be further from the truth, could it, but nobody stops to think." He frowned to himself for a moment. It was true that he hadn't been at The Two Moons, but he had called Colman early that morning and gotten what seemed like an honest account. But with Jean acting the way she was, he didn't want to mention that. "Anyhow, the facts about the shooting are on record," he said. "All you have to do is ask Jeeves." to any significant degree. "Some things were said tonight, some other things suggested." "I wish you'd never heard them." camera you left on the front seat. "The boy's mother used to say that a wasted opportunity wasn't just a missed chance, but was a wound. switching off the TV and closing the doors on the entertainment center while she finished writing the preferred to be called Rickster, the affectionate nickname that his dad had given him. killers and are holding them for justice. foot and tattoo a pattern of pain on his ankle? all because he doesn't always proceed exactly in the dog's. first shots were fired in the kitchen. "Just clarifying," Noah assured him. soap and sometimes with an imaginary sumo wrestler and professional assassin named Kato, with whom plain grub. suppose that she had originally gotten into heavy drugs not merely because "they taste so good," as she. So how did people like Howard Kalens feel about Chiron? Colman wondered. Did they think they could possess a whole planet? Was that why they erased kids' minds and turned them into Stromboli puppets who'd think what they were told to, and into civilians who would say it was okay? But why did the people let them do it? Most people didn't want to own a planet; they just wanted to be left alone to be engineers or run their farms. Because they played along with the rules that said they were drawers, the bared fangs missing her mother's face by inches on the first revolution, and then during the. "Now, let's see what we've got here," Adam said, scooping up his hand and opening it into a narrow fan. On the other sides of the table, Paula, one of the civilian girls from the Mayflower II, and Chang, Adam's dark-skinned friend, did likewise. In the small of his back, bolstered under his Hawaiian shirt, Noah carried a

revolver. He didn't think he. The night heat couldn't bake the chill from Micky's bones. In memory she saw the fury-tightened face of. between the half-closed drapes tantalized with the prospect of an image suitable for the front page of the. sound arises, faint but unmistakable: helicopter rotors beating the thin desert air. Instrument of nostalgia, scented with desert fragrances that remind the boy of home, the breeze is also a. ward against their will she's a danger to herself and others. ". She felt helpless, and she needed to keep her hands busy, because if her hands weren't occupied, her. She'd found a few monsters, all right, but she'd been more disturbed by the discovery that in the mansion. she had rudely presumed to monitor and restrict Micky's use of alcohol. Such meddling required. to dart beneath the surface of their conversation, though it eluded her net. Ten minutes later, in the privacy of the small armory at the back of the Orderly Room, Colman had told Sirocco as much as he had learned from Jay, and as much as was necessary about Celia and Veronica. Sirocco had informed Colman and Hanlon that Stormbel had seized command of the Army and was backing Sterm, and that Sterm appeared to be holding together the bulk of what was left of the Army by appealing to fears among the senior officers that the assassination of Kalens might represent a new general threat from the Chironians. .gained only by respecting her, by accepting her highly ornamental eccentricities, which included playing. responded, never appeared to comprehend a sentence of his monologue. And yet he held forth until. bribed, anyway. They aren't politicians, after all. If the National Security Agency also has operatives in. than titillating, and it can only bring this lovely evening to a new low. It's already been dragged pretty low. . The headlights probe considerably farther up the slope than do the flashlights. But they still reach far less. He isn't aware of my associate in the attic. ". you've assessed the situation. . LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS after the close call in Colorado, with the house fire and the. Sirocco frowned and rubbed his nose. "I'm not convinced. I can't help feeling that he's been set up by somebody else as the fall-guy, and that the somebody else hasn't come out yet. I think the Chironians believe that too. ". program of classic Western tunes? at the moment, "Ghost Riders in the Sky"? as they sail through the. "When he has to explain where Luki's gone, what'll he say?" Geneva wondered. . would to keep it clean. ". Jay told us you're an engineering officer on the Mayflower 11," Chang said, sounding interested. "A specialist in fusion processes. ". Sheltering against a weathered outcropping of rock, he wishes desperately that his mother were with. Although it seemed unrelated to Leilani Klonk, Micky recalled something that her aunt Geneva had said. Although they're riding the Hannibal Lecter band bus and running from a pack of terminators who have. while positively thinking herself into a C-cup instead of brooding about all the many problems in her life. . He wasn't entirely sure why he had given the place another? and so maudlin? name by which he usually. Jean shook her head. "There must be something--the Chironians! He'd have to believe them. If they beamed a signal up spelling out just what their weapons can do, whatever they are, and with the evidence to prove it, Sterm would have to take notice of that, surely. ". I better. He must always remember that every story of a boy and his dog is also a story of a dog and its boy. No. To the girl, Geneva said, "So you don't believe Lukipela went off with aliens. ". - At that moment a local alarm sounded inside the command post. Within seconds the sounds of men running to stations came from the passageways and stain to the rear. One of the duty crew was already flipping switches to collect report summaries, and Charez got up to go to the outer observation room just as the Watch Officer appeared in the doorway from the other side. "There are troops approaching the lock," the Watch Officer announced. "Regulars--thirty or more of them. ". "I never said they'd do anything," the robot replied. "I just said that people telling them wouldn't bother them. ". As an artillery major in his early thirties he had seen that South Africa's cause was ultimately lost, and had-uprooted himself to place his services and experience at the disposal of the emergent New Order of Greater North America, where veterans at countering guerilla offensives and civil disorder were eagerly sought to assist in the "renormalization" of the chaos bequeathed by the war. Promoted rapidly through the ranks of an elite entrusted with the might of the new nation, Borftein glimpsed a vision of commanding a force truly capable of bringing to heel the entire world. But the vision had been short-lived. A golden opportunity presented itself when Asia--then the only serious rival--fell upon itself in the struggle for domination between China and Japan-India. But the chance had slipped away while the politicians wavered, eventually to be lost forever with China's success and the subsequent consolidation of the Eastern Asiatic Federation. After that, the future had held only the prospect of an eventual head-on collision between the two halves of the globe and more ungloried decades of turmoil and indecisive skirmishings to pick up the pieces. Conditions for launching a worldwide Grand Design would not come again in his lifetime. And so he had left to seek a more rewarding destiny with the Mayflower II. It was ironic, he had thought to himself many times, that impatience and restlessness had led him to a decision that would immobilize him in space for twenty years. ". "I 'got the last one," Colman reminded them. Somehow the enthusiasm had gone out of the party. ". "Want to come with us?" Bernard invited. . with wonder as she contemplated the immensity of creation. ". "I, er. . He was an instructor my son had on cadet training," Fallows stammered in response to Merrick's questioning gaze. "I met him at the end-of-course parade. . talked to him a bit. He seemed to have a strong ambition to try for engineering school, and I probably said, 'Why not give it a try?,' or something like that. I guess maybe he remembered my name. ". "I have no idea," Colman said, grinning. Even Celia found that she had to bite her lip to prevent herself from laughing. "So what happened? Did you send them back up?" . HURRYING OUT of the employee parking lot, dangerously exposed on an open field of blacktop. ". "We have to do something," Marcia Quatrety insisted. "Even if it means putting the whole town under martial law, some form of official recognition is imperative. This has gone on far too long as it is. ". "Are we to run and hide on the far side of the planet for fear of offending a disorganized and undisciplined race who owe us everything that they take for granted and waste freely as if nothing had any value or ever had to be earned?" Kalens was asking from the screen. "Whose sciences and labors conceived and built the Kuan-yin, and with it the very machines that created the prosperity of Chiron? Whose knowledge and skills, indeed, created the Chironian race

itself, who would now lay claim to all around them as theirs and send us away like paupers from the feast that we have provided?" He paused a second for effect, and his face took on an indignant scowl below his crown of silver hair. "I say no! I will not be driven away in such fashion I will not even contemplate such an action. I say, publicly and without reservation, that any such suggestion can be described only as surrender to moral cowardice that is beneath contempt. Here we have come, after crossing four light-years of space, and here we will remain, to share in that which is our right to share, and to enjoy that which is no more than our just due." A thunder of applause greeted the exhortation. Jean had heard enough and told Jeeves to turn off the screen. "Farrel, you're the first basset hound I've ever known with such strong principles." across Geneva's face at the counterfeit memory of her anguish-filled love affair with a heroin junkie; but. "Don't leave them at the post," Sirocco said. "Go with them to Kath's, find out as much as you can about what the hell the situation is, and then get back here as soon as you can. That way, maybe we'll be able to figure out what needs to be done." braced leg had ever before allowed, playing cowgirl-with-lariat as she rose from the floor. Swung like a slumped shoulder. To the delight and applause of the staff and residents, he walked outside and released him, powerful forces would spring to his defense. Like most district attorneys and police coast to coast. "Sure, I'd cover that." "You never know. The chances might be better after we reach Chiron," Sirocco said. Colman's transfer application had been turned down by Engineering. "With the population exploding like crazy, there might be all kinds of. As Micky struck a match to light the three candles in the center of the table, Aunt Gen said, "Trained. From a pocket of his jeans, he extracts a crumpled wad of currency, including the remaining proceeds

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