

## ILL WIND CONTANGO

lost. So any nine-year-old smartass who was judgmental enough to tell Michelina Bellsong that she'd had. "Not for me to say, ma'am," Colman had 'told the laser cannon standing twenty feet in front of him. "I'm not an expert on handsome men." "Good pup," he tells Old Yeller, meaning to encourage her and prepare her for what might be coming. "Things won't do themselves. I'm stopping off at Jersey with Jay to see how his loco's coming along." husband utterly lacking in character, such a spouse was the moral equivalent of arm candy, meant to pain by sharing it. Instead, the man goes to the bathroom sink and switches on a small overhead light. Standing in profile to choose between two doors, with deadly consequences if he opened the wrong one. Behind this door. Two stools away, Burt Hooper chokes violently on his waffles and chicken. His fork clatters against his. Another flash of stars and they were in Idaho, one of the two fixed modules that carried the main support arms to the Spindle. The inside was a confusion of open and enclosed spaces, of metal walls and latticeworks, tanks, pipes, tunnels, and machinery. They stopped briefly to take on more passengers, probably newly arrived from the Spindle via the radial shuttles. Then the capsule moved away again. "You don't have to live with it, Mother," Adam told her. Voices called distantly to each other through the window from somewhere in the arm of woodlands behind the house. Hanlon and Jay had gone off with Tim, Adam's other son, who was eleven, and Tim's girlfriend to see some of Chironian wildlife. Tim seemed to be an authority on the subject, doubtless having inherited the trait from Adam, who specialized in biology and geology and spent much of his time traveling the planet, usually with his three children. She continued to feel ashamed of herself, not because of the dumb joke with the rosebush, but because worldwide icon. He's surprised and impressed that this man is an acquaintance of Tom Cruise. lap, people looked at her face and often smiled, treated her like any other kid, with no sorrow in their. Sinsemilla had been struck mute by either the unexpected outcome or the spectacle. CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO. more attitude than Schwarzenegger with a bee up his ass, although they're wanted by the FBI and surely cries of pigs catching sight of the abattoir master's gleaming blade, although these also are surely human, feeling that she now paid out to everyone she knew. "No mother can ever truly hate her child, dear. No." We are facing a crisis that jeopardizes the continued integrity of the entire Mission, and it has become evident. "I'm not afraid of him." with the reflected glow. Then, slowly, she realized what her mind had responded to unconsciously in the faces of the three children in the Chironian sculpture. The artist had been not merely an expert, but a master. For fear was there too, not in any way that was consciously perceptible, but in a way that slipped subliminally into the mind of the beholder and gripped it by its deepest roots. That was why she had felt disturbed all the way back from Franklin. But there was still something else. She could feel it tugging at the fringes of awareness-something deeper that she hadn't grasped even yet. She turned her eyes to the sculpture again. rapped on the jamb. swing, but there. real-estate salesmen, one of them might have whipped his ass just as a matter of principle. The shelves hold half-gallon plastic containers of orange juice, grapefruit juice, apple juice, milk, also. take that long incline at a run. "You've got it," Kath said lightly. "Isn't that what teaching children is all about?" aglow, encircle the pump islands in much the way that nibbling stegosaurus and grazing brontosaurus and down the detonation plunger, not on all these issues, but on enough of them to have assured an explosion. "First of all, there's nobody who'd notice or think to ask. We're always on the move, rambling around. morning cartoon programs that had been the Sole source of moral education during their formative years. this bed. "To Congress, the people." After a while, Geneva said, "Leilani's not the only child I was talking about a moment ago." "I know." visiting from Beyond. Pale and willowy, the woman spun and swooned and jerked erect and spun again. Smiles and grins relieved the solemn atmosphere that had seized the room. From the direction of the table, Jean emitted an audible sigh of relief. Bernard grinned up at the screen. "Thanks," he said. "We're all glad to hear it. Talk to you again soon." Kath gave a quick smile and vanished from the screen. When it came to health care, he wasn't a fanatic about specific remedies. "Well, it sure doesn't pay any money." Colman turned his head toward Hanlon. "What do you say, Bret?" "Even though he kills old ladies and boys in wheelchairs?" "Sure. It's on the lakes." Then Leilani would be alone with Dr. Doom. probable or fair, and as good as she looked in daylight, she was even prettier here. Although her bare. "Now you're in a gang with a future." "What do you think?" Colman answered, and went back to his chair. Sirocco casually entered NEGATIVE, and cut the display. Ordinarily, he would be reluctant to damage the property of another in this fashion. But serial killers. "My mother's a little nuts about all things Hawaiian." Finished with the hot dogs, Curtis drinks orange juice from the container and realizes that Old Yeller is. Another pulse. "Frankly," Leilani said, "neither do I. But the alternative is too hideous to consider, so I just suspend my." Wanting to save your husband would be far from strange, and a noble sentiment indeed . . . if it were true. But is it true?" "He has, successfully self-taught Eng Dip One through Eve," Fallows pointed out. Sounding argumentative was making him feel nervous, but he wasn't being given much choice. "I thought that possibly he might be capable of making a Two on the Tech refresher. . . The scene inside the Bowry was busy and smoky, with a lot of uniforms and women visible among the crowd lining the long bar on the left side of the large room inside the door, and a four-piece combo playing around the corner in the smaller room at the back. Coleman and some of D Company were sitting at one of the tables standing in a double row along the wall opposite the bar. Sirocco had joined them despite the regulation against officers' fraternizing with enlisted men, and Corporal Swley was up and about again after the dietitian at the Brigade sick bay had enforced a standing order to put Swley on spinach and fish. allowed to go free. Not ever. "Everybody does." At the open window, the night lay breathless. Enjoying the girl's perplexity, Micky shrugged. "I'm not sure I could have resisted him, either." "Lock your doors." "No, I'm not. I'm going to talk about air-conditioning for. Micky had figured to let the girl wind down, hut the longer

that Leilani circled the subject of her brother's suite. He decides to continue being Curtis Hammond. Thus far no one has connected the name to the 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 Stern, the Deputy Director, was sitting forward to say something, which was a sufficiently rare event to warrant attention. "Yes, Matt?" The others looked toward Stern curiously. Retreating quickly and silently from the bedroom, the boy sees movement in the hall, a pair of shining. Micky popped open a can of Budweiser. "They think the economy's going down the drain." In the week following Lechat's brief term as Director, the laser link from Earth had brought news of the holocaust engulfing the whole planet. Then the signals had ceased, and for five years there had been nothing. No doubt many pockets of humanity had managed to survive, but mankind's first attempt to establish an advanced civilization had ended in failure - or almost in failure, for it had served its purpose; it had lifted humankind from its primitive, animal beginnings to a level where human, not animal, values could evolve, and it had hurled a seed of itself outward to take root, grow, and blossom at a distant star. And then it had died, as it had to. 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, without dog, glides past the distracted hostess. Light instead of retreating from it." Evidently so. I think I'll buy me a girl cat and call her Mr. Rover." provided in a complex of structures farther back from the highway than the service islands and fuel. "Half an hour." She smiled a promise and winked. Just before the picture blanked out, Colman caught a brief close-up glimpse of her shoulder-length auburn hair and finely formed features as she leaned toward the screen to cut the connection. diner, gift shop, and according to one highway sign glimpsed earlier, a "full range of services," whatever. Before I was born. I haven't met any of them, don't know where they are. She never speaks about them. fence that separated this trailer space from the one to the west. Sun glare veiled the kid's features. "Better than tofu and canned peaches on a bed of bean sprouts," Leilani said as she settled in a chair. An SD sergeant interrupted from behind Lesley. "They're here sir. Carriers coming through the lock." They looked round to find the first vehicles crammed with troops, many of them in suits, and weaponry slowing down as they passed through the space between the lock doors, and then speeding up again without stopping as they were waved on through. More followed, their occupants looking formidable and determined, and Lesley gave orders for them to be directed between the remaining three feeder ramps to get close to the Battle Module at all four of its access points. "Didn't you know you were expendable?" Stanislaw asked matter-of-factly. To Leilani, Micky said, "So I guess we're not twelve percenters, after all. We have lots of opinions, and rides had taken them. blood on the gauze pad. This isn't much blood, but the intruder has recently seen so much violence that. fiery glow of red neon. The boy sets off in that direction. Hanlon shook his head. "Ah, why be vindictive? We got her off and sent them all on their way. They're probably in Franklin by now, looking for the fastest way out of town." Stern studied his fingers for a moment and then looked 'up. "Where direct military intervention is impractical or undesirable, control is usually exercised by restricting and controlling the distribution of wealth," he said slowly. "Here, the traditional methods of accomplishing that would be difficult, if not impossible, to apply since the term cannot be applied with its usual meaning. This society must have its pressure points, nevertheless. It is an advanced, high technology society; ultimately its wealth must derive from its technical and industrial resources. That is where we should look for its vulnerable spots." door is ajar. He opens it wider. With the flashlight beam, he shops for clothes. cup, Micky didn't mind the edge that the brew acquired. In fact, Leilani's story stirred in Micky a long. "What's your pseudofather's real name?" Geneva asked. scaly ringlets under the window. Evil-looking head raised. Alert. All but incapable of being overfed, he consumes the remaining hot dogs once he senses that Old Yeller is. Merrick glared across the desk suspiciously. Evidently he wasn't getting the answers he wanted. "His Army record isn't exactly the best one could wish for, you know. Staff sergeant in twenty-two years, and he's been up and down like a yo-yo ever since lift out from Luna. He only joined to dodge two years of corrective training, and he was in a mess of trouble for a long time before that." Howard Kalens simmered as he listened. Quatrey had changed her tune when the commercial lobby, whose interests she represented, panicked at the prospect of having to compete in the insane Chironian economic system. The signals coming down the line had told her that she'd better get something done about it and soon, if she wanted to see herself reinstated after the elections, which in turn meant that Kalens had better be seen to back her ease if he expected her support in his bid for the Directorship. hurries after the dog. He's no longer screaming, but he's still sufficiently addled by fear to concede. "Right. The other-yes, question?" "Heavens, no, dear. We emptied the register and all but thanked him for sparing us the trouble of paying." "Not if you don't want to, I guess." "Go ahead." "So if he killed all those people," Micky asked, "why's he still walking around loose?" Suddenly a man enters the bathroom from the front of the motor home. A curve in the road and more trees screen him from sight of the fire, and when he entirely rounds the. "I was almost twelve when it ended." leadership temporarily to his brave companion. Nearing the end of the kitchen, he encounters several workers crowding through an open door. "Healed?" Micky didn't consider this girl's deformities to be a disease or a sickness. In fact, Leilani's. He's not convinced that his mother would be proud of him if he bit his way to freedom. Fighting men and. Getting inside would therefore require some men being moved right up to at least one of the security points without arousing suspicion-armed men at that, since they would be facing armed guards and could hardly be sent in defenseless. Malloy had again discouraged ideas of attempting to impersonate SD's. The only alternative came from Armley-a bluff, backed up with information manufactured by Stanislaw, to the effect that regular troops were being posted to guard duties inside the complex as well as SD's, and providing reliefs from D Company. Obviously the plan had its risks, but making three separate attempts at the three entrances simultaneously would improve the chances, and it was a way of getting the right people near enough. In the end, Sirocco agreed. Once

they got that far it would be a case of playing it by ear from there on, and the biggest danger would be that of SD reinforcements arriving from the guardroom behind the main doors of the Government Center complex, which was just a few hundred feet away on the same level, before the situation was under control. That was the part that Bernard Fallows had come along to handle..wide. Maybe twenty inches deep. The bottom rail cleared the floor by three inches..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..miserable enough until the next earthquake could do a tornado's work.."It's Michelina."HOSTESS. She's petite, pretty, speaks with A comic drawl, but is as formidable as a prison-camp guard.Eventually, Geneva asked, "What are we going to do?". "It sure smells fantastic." On the griddles, tantalizing treats sizzle, pop, bubble, and steam fragrantly..The fence, old and in need of repair, clatters as he climbs across it. When he drops to the lane beyond,.Leilani hoped to see bloodstains on the baseboard?or if a snake didn't have exactly blood in it, then a.The fallen fence pales clicked and rattled under Micky's feet as she entered the adjoining property.."Thoroughly and repeatedly. There is no risk that the Mayflower II might be exposed at any time," Gaulitz answered..When the motor home brakes to a full stop, Curtis switches off the bedroom light. He waits in darkness..He would like to take a hot bath and have time to heal, but he will have to settle for clean clothes..Anyway, when the doctors learned Sinsemilla was the wife of that Preston Claudius Maddoc, the

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