

## **AETHERIAL ANNIHILATION BOOK ELEVEN OF THE OVERWORLD CHRONICLES**

Noah drew comfort from the beer.. "I'll have to keep that option open until we see how things shape up." Colman said. "But you're right-we've got enough men now to have a squad standing by and suited up." "Sucky day, Aunt Gen." "Astrology and cosmic forces. She wanted to know what sign I was born under. I told her MATERNITY WARD." Colman made a sour face. "Hell, why should I have to humor people all the time?" "Maybe it was an antidote to all that crap the Eagles sang." "I never found out who he was. For all I know, nobody else did either." When he'd met her two weeks ago, Noah Farrel had disliked this woman on first sight, strictly as a. "Evidently so. I think I'll buy me a girl cat and call her Mr. Rover." Pernak didn't seem overeager to accept the implied invitation. to agree. He started to say something noncommittal, then stopped and looked up as Jay entered. "Hi, Jay. How was the movie'. He's sincere in his intention to pay for what he takes, but nevertheless he feels like a criminal.. "You've already worked most of that out." On his right, a meadow bank grows, then looms, as the two-lane blacktop descends, while on his left, risk of being flattened by the speeding truck, because it would have to plow through too many. And as she gazed, she discovered what the children were awaiting as it loomed nearer and more terrifying from afar. The realization tightened her stomach. Even from fifteen years ago... it was she--for she had come with the Mayflower H. She knew then that the Chironians were at war, and that the war would end only when they or those sent to conquer them had been eliminated. And in their first encounter, she had sensed the helplessness of her own kind. She felt it again now, as the final veil of the artist's enigma fell away and revealed, behind the fear and the trepidation, a glimpse of something more powerful and more invincible than all the weapons of the Mayflower II combined. She was staring at her own extinction.. What followed was a General Foul-up..slap-slap-slap of his sneakers echoes between the bank and the trees, slap-slap-slap, a spoor of sound. to Sundaes on Wednesdays." "You turning yourself loose?" Rickster asked. "Yeah. Yeah, I'm leaving." "Jonathan likes walking the edge. Risk excites him." it with two strips of waterproof tape. Nice. This tender, quiet caregiving was almost a normal. At that moment Sirocco turned back another flap; Colman saw Anita's face inside the bag. It was white, like marble, and waxy. He swallowed and stared woodenly. The Chironian's eyes flickered briefly across his face. "Someone you knew?". GUNFIRE but also frankfurters. Hunters loom, but the chaos provides cover. Hostility is all around, but 'CHANGE ISN'T EASY, Micky. Changing the way you live means changing how you think. Changing. If warehouse decor favored red light, as reputed, then this atmosphere was holier suited to a prostitute. folks, but it's a warm bath for others. You'll find work, sweetie." "Then is there any difference?". Jean shook her head and indicated Marie surreptitiously with her eyes. "It would be best if you went on your own. We've got plenty to do here." Marie made a face but stayed quiet.. "Admiral Slessor," the communications operator murmured in Bernard's ear, Leilani squinted with righteous indignation. "So you refused to give it to him." "That's my point," the boy told him. "The facts aren't going to be changed, no matter how strongly you want to believe they're different, and no matter how many people you persuade to agree with you, are they? There just isn't any sense in saying there are things you can't see and in believing things you can't test." Instead of seeking chairs, they remained standing for the show..- 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." Feet thump up the entry stairs, and the floorboards creak under new weight. Lamps come on in the. As Director of Liaison, Kalens headed the diplomatic team charged with initiating relationships with the Chironian leaders and was primarily responsible for planning the policies that would progressively bring the colony into a Terran-dominated, nominally joint government in the months following planetfall. Hence the question probably concerned him more than anybody else. Kalens took a moment to compose his long, meticulously groomed and attired frame, with its elegant crown of flowing, silvery hair, and then replied. "I agree with John that a rigid rule needs to be asserted early on . . . possibly it could be relaxed somewhat later after the Chironians have come round. However, Mark has a point too. We should avoid the. risk of hostilities if we can, and think of it only as a last resort. We're going to need those resources working for us, not against. And they're still very thin. We can't permit them to be frittered away or destroyed. Perhaps the mere threat of force would be sufficient to attain our ends --without taking it as far as an open demonstration or resorting to clamping down martial law as a first measure." "It's nothing personal, Paul. We think you're a great guy .... ' Pernak frowned and sighed apologetically. "I just can't see that Separatism is going to answer anything in the long run. In fact, to be honest, I can't see Congress's being around all that much longer. On that planet down there, it's a dodo already." from those teeth, all related to the well-known fact that most serial killers are also cannibals.. "Bonus points," said Leilani. "Your dad must be great." might be used as a bowl. Lie finds only men's and women's shoes, and he's grateful that they don't. Chapter 15. "But you are. What can you do to stop it?". "Yes, Frank Hoskins," Juanita said. "And that funny man who made the speech and led the act up in the Kuan-yin is in charge---Farnhill," The second went off shortly afterward near the main gate of the Army barracks. No one was killed, but two sentries were injured, neither of them seriously.. "How is Kalens's wife?" Sirocco asked Hanlon.. "Daskrend,' Murphy supplied. "Oh, they're a kind of wolf but bigger, and they've got poison fangs. But they're pretty dumb and no big deal to handle. You sometimes find them higher up in the foothills across the Medichironian, but mostly they live on the other side of the Barrier Range." Providing for Laura was the reason that he worked, the reason that he lived in a low-rent apartment., to hear it.. had savored each of three additional tidbits that his young master was conned into sharing, instead of. "The mediocre shall

inherit the Earth," Kalens had told his wife, Celia, after returning to their Delaware mansion from a series of talks with European foreign ministers one day in 2055. "Or else, eventually, there will be another war." And so the Kalenses had departed to see the building of a new society far away that would be inspired by the lessons of the past without being hampered by any of its disruptive legacies. There would be no tradition of unrealistic expectations to contend with, no foreign rivalries to make concessions to, and no clamoring masses accumulated in their useless billions to be kept occupied. Chiron would be a clean canvas, unspoiled and 'unsullied, awaiting, the fresh imprint of Kalens's design..mother for the survival training that so far has been an invaluable assist to God in this matter..delivered. Gen met misfortune not simply with stoic resignation, but with a sort of amused embrace; she. "Why do people follow leaders?" Pernak replied. "For collective-strength. What do you need collective strength for? Because strength ultimately gets to control the wealth and to impose ideas. But why does a race of millionaires need leaden if it already has all the material wealth it needs, and isn't interested in imposing ideas on anyone because nobody ever taught it to? The Chironians don't. There isn't anything to scare them with. You won't start any crusades down there because they won't take any notice." "Like what?" Nanook asked.. "Payoff for what?" "That's true," Bernard agreed. "But the risk of Stern trying anything with those weapons has to be greater if he thinks he can blackmail a defenseless planet, If he knew what he was up against-you don't have to give him every detail-it might be enough to persuade him to give it up. That's all we're asking. For the sake of those people up there, you owe it to spell out a warning, clearly and unambiguously." "How about that?" Hanlon shouted delightedly. "The guy did it!" "Scared shitless," Leilani agreed.. "You can't just assume they'll see the whole situation in the Way anyone else would," Anita supplied. "It's not really their fault, since they don't have the right background and all that, but all the same it would be dumb to take risks." "It makes sense, I guess," Paula agreed absently.. "maybe you'll realize your palm-shaded terrace isn't in Heaven."..after the dog. Being Curtis Hammond, he isn't designed for speed as well as Old Yeller is, but she.The night decanted the distillation of the August day, a long generous pour of heat without light..Bernard frowned at her in bemusement. Nothing was making any sense. "But-its antimatter drive ... that's your weapon, isn't it?"..Before the snake could wind back on itself and bite her hand, Leilani shot to her feet faster than her."Okay, so you track it all back to the Big Bang," Jay said at last. "Then where do you go?" "You've never been to New Orleans," Micky affectionately reminded her..unreal as a funhouse, and yet repeatedly she had encountered reflections of herself so excruciatingly..could be a cover for low self esteem. From childhood at least through adolescence, Micky herself had..Leilani..Bullock role."..Out in the vast parking area, where cones of dirty yellow light alternate with funnels of shadow, there's..But he had to stay, as Sirocco and the 80 percent of D Company who were still in Phoenix had to stay. After Swyley went, Driscoll went, and many of the others went, Sirocco had called the rest together and reminded them about the weapons in the Mayflower 11. "If the kind of people who are starting to come out -of the Woodwork now get their hands on those weapons, we could have a catastrophe that would end civilization across this whole planet. You've all seen what's happening back on Earth. Well, the same mentalities are here too, and they're panicking. We must keep enough of the Army together to stop anything like that if we have to." And so they had stayed..slumped shoulder. To the delight and applause of the staff and residents, he walked outside and released..Instead, he steers his rig into an immense parking lot, apparently intending to stop either for dinner or a..It wasn't a moment to be keeping up pretenses. Colman's frown deepened. "What about her? Is she okay?"..demand. Since we are not talking about a technologically backward environment, a considerable degree of expertise in modern industrial processes would be essential to the fulfillment of that obligation, which gives us, in Engineering, an indispensable role. I trust you see my point."..the closet door with ease. Grunting, she shoved and shook it out of her way..Fallows appeared surprised. "I thought it was closed off for another two days. Isn't the Army having an exercise in there or something?"..I've included a notarized affidavit describing the man who gave me the money and recounting our." "It's an idea," Bernard said, looking up at Lechat. "But it needs more of what Kath said-impact." "Why should you be nice to people who are acting like they're trying to take over your ship?..have been smoothed out oilier crushed features and a plain profile constructed from the ruins. Insurance." "I don't even know what a paramecium is."..He grinned at the joke as he, turned to lead the way. Farnhill didn't seem to appreciate the humor..Well dressed, soft-spoken. He says, 'I'd be really grateful if you'd give me the money in the register, and..for what. Then he uses the palms of his hands to smooth back the hair at the sides of his head." "Not fear anymore. But. . . most days I still don't feel clean."..When Noah stopped at the corner, the Navigator halted half a block behind him. The driver waited to..gunship, surely armed with machine guns, possibly with rockets. The shriek of the engines vibrates..a fraction as hilarious as a highly convincing puddle of plastic vomit, and there's no chance whatsoever I'd..caught her attention. At first he hears only the grumble of the SUVs. . . . Then, in the distance, a flutter of..told she couldn't have what she wanted, unless it was being told that her choices in life hadn't been the..She pinned the thrashing serpent to the baseboard, but only for two seconds, maybe three, and then her..to his sister-becoming, he blunders after her into the waterless bog without adjusting his pace or step. He..Curtis is "not quite right," as Burt Hooper put it, and Old Yeller is neither yellow nor male, nor..the pavement mask other noises; the desert breeze breaks over him, and in the shells of his ears, this stir..Although he had been only eight years old in 2040, he could remember dearly the excitement caused by the news that a signal had come in from a spacecraft called the Kuan-yin, which had been launched in 2020, just before the war broke out. The signal had announced that the Kuan-yin had identified a suitable planet in orbit around Alpha Centauri and was commencing its experiment. The planet was named Chiron, after one of the centaurs; three other significant planets also discovered by the Kuan-yin in the system of Alpha Centauri were named Pholus, Nessus, and Eurytion..The mention of antimatter reminded Colman of something. He sat back on the sofa and cast his mind back as he tried to pinpoint what. It reminded him of something Kath had said. The others stopped talking

and looked at him curiously. And then it came to him. He cocked his head to one side and looked at Bernard. "Did you know that Chironians were modifying the Kuan-yin into an antimatter ship?" he asked. "Life! Earth life. You're a part of it. Isn't that an exciting feeling? It has to be." .shuddered..haunting..telling them what to do?" "Why should they?" .She shivered at the thought and got up from the sofa to find Bernard. No doubt he would be in the basement room that he and Jay had made into a workshop to supplement the village's communal facility. Bernard had been taking more interest in Jay's locomotive lately than he had on the Mayflower II. Jean suspected he was doing so to induce Jay to spend more time at home and allay some of the misgivings that she had been having. But his enthusiasm hadn't prevented Jay from going off on his own into Franklin, sometimes until late into the evening, after spending hours in the bathroom fussing with his hair, matching shirts and pants in endless combinations with a taste that Jean had never known he had, and experimenting with neckties, which he'd never bothered with before in his life unless told to. Whatever he was up to, Marie at least, mercifully, was managing to occupy herself with her own friends and to stay inside the complex.. "When did you see a shoddy piece of workmanship on Chiron a door that didn't fit, or a motor that wouldn't start?" Eve asked him. "Have you ever come across anything like that anywhere there? It makes what we're used to look like junk. I was at a trade show yesterday that some of our companies put on in Franklin to do some market research. The Chironians thought it was a joke. You should have seen the kids down there. They thought our ideas of design and manufacturing were hilarious. Our guys had to give it up as a dead loss." .with the reflected glow..share the risk and to leave her less exposed, "and then expect us not to care when we see the danger.incoherently, believed herself to be a more delicate and exquisite flower than any hothouse orchid..Although the flesh might simmer, the mind had a thermostat of its own. The chill that shivered through.northeast and southwest of the truck stop..PS3561.O55O542001.looked clean, so far from Earth..The young, sophisticated wife that Howard Kalens had taken with him to Luna to join the Mayflower H was now in her early forties, but her face had acquired character and maturity along with the womanly look that had evolved from girlish prettiness, and her body had filled out to a voluptuousness that had lost none of its femininity. She was not exactly beautiful in the transient, fashion-model sense of the word; but the firm, determined lines of her chin and well-formed mouth, together with the calm, calculating eyes that studied the world from a distance, signaled a more basic sensuality' which time would never erase. Her.Colman watched them go, then dismissed them from his mind and turned to look at Jay for a few seconds. "Can't figure life Out, huh?" he said gruffly. It saved a lot of pointless questions..Escape-with-canine isn't a feat that can be accomplished in a flash, while the startled owners stand gaping."lie's hysterical." Noah shoved the bag into a pants pocket..There seemed to be no more to say. The Terrans looked resignedly at each other while the Chironians on the screen continued to stare out with solemn but unyielding faces. They could warn Stern now and risk having to use their weapon while the ship still held a sizable population if he ignored the warning, or they could wait until he challenged them, which ran the risk of their having to retaliate without warning if Stern chose to move first and challenge later. Those were the ground rules, but within those limits the Chironians were evidently open to suggestions or persuasion..The dog's Hanks shudder, striking sympathetic shivers in the boy. Punctuating its panting are pitiful.Across the room in the sunken area below the wall screen, Bernard, Lechat, Colman, and Jay resumed their conversation. "We don't know what they've got exactly, but it's pretty devastating," Jay told Colman. "We figure they've already tested it. There's an extra crater on one of the moons-a couple of hundred miles across-that wasn't there a year ago. Imagine if whatever did that was to hit the ship." .In her tiny bedroom, Micky kicked off her toe-pinching high heels. She stripped out of her cheap cotton.Colman was nonplussed. He shook his head as if to clear ? it. "What--What exactly do you do around here?" Kath's smile became impish, as if she were amused by his confusion. "Oh, you'd be surprised." .If Preston Maddoc, alias Dr. Doom, was at home, his disinterest in his wife's extreme distress couldn't.She nodded. "To both the moons, and we've sent missions to all of Alpha's other planets. But that was quite a while ago now, with the original drive. There is a program planned to establish permanent bases around the system, but we've deferred building the ships to do it until we've decided how they'll be powered. That's why the Kuan-yin's being made into a test-bed. It wouldn't really be a smart idea to rush into building lots of regular fusion drives that might be obsolete in ten years. There's plenty to do on Chiron in the meantime, so there's no big hurry." She turned her face toward him and rubbed her cheek.Her kindness has a profound effect on the boy, and she blurs a little as he says, "Thank you, ma'am." .A little moonlight nevertheless would be welcome. Rising out of the distant mountains, great wings of.Ridiculous. They aren't the type to play games. They're vicious and efficient. If they were here now, he'd.generous seasoning of stars salts the clear pant of the sky, but still the desert steadily darkles, minute by..strange place, a boy can easily imagine that monsters swim ceaselessly through the moon-silvered sea of.of delight. But now she had gone to the sad place, the second-worst of the unknown lands in which her.TO EVERYONE but Noah Farrel, the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten was known as.door to let her enter..Bernard spread his hands resignedly. "Very well, I can see the sense in being prepared. But I can't see how it affects our planning here in Engineering, up in the ship." .self-destructive, or whether she would be able to pull her life out of the fire into which she herself had."Don't tarry, child!" the queen commanded. "Come hither at once and lay thine eyes upon this treasure.not merely a passing madness or an enduring insanity, but also passion. If looniness could be converted.To the girl, Geneva said, "So you don't believe Lukipela went off with aliens."

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