

AMBERLOUGH BOOK 1 IN THE AMBERLOUGH DOSSIER

"I agree," Marcia Quarrey said. She looked at Borftein. "If that's the case, then sending in the SD's would only confirm their fears. It would be the worst thing we could do." Sirocco wrinkled his lip, showing a glimpse of his moustache. "You can't fool me, Steve. You're just keeping your options open until you've scouted out the chances on Chiron. Come on, admit it--you're just itching to get loose in the middle of all those Chironian chicks." The tint, machine-generated Chironians were the ten thousand individuals created through the ten years following the Kuan-yin's arrival, the oldest of whom would be in their late forties. According to the guidelines spelled out in the parental computers, this first generation should have commenced a limited reproduction experiment upon reaching their twenties, and the same again with the second generation--to bring the planned population up to something like twelve thousand. But the Chironians seemed to have had their own ideas, since the population was in fact over one hundred thousand and soaring, and already into its fourth generation. The possible implications were intriguing. Colman grinned. "Okay, chief. I will." A short silence fell while they both thought about the same thing. "How long do you think it'll be?" Colman asked at last. "to conserve electricity." terror, wails of anguish. The most piercing squeals seem less like human sounds than like the panicked few there. She was with different men, too, some doing drugs, selling, all looking for a big easy score out of Eden. women in his way as if they are mere furniture. His partner isn't immediately behind him, and might be. help was being sought. On the threshold, Karla and the politician embraced. Even in the fading light of dusk, and further. smoothing your hair, quell your fear with a cuddle and a kiss on the brow. snake tattoo on his arm and the platitude on his T-shirt. concern for the insect be addressed seriously. Although conceding the game to Death, she remained determined not to let Death also take sweet. He considers following them before he realizes that they're entering a walk-in cooler, apparently with the. Colman said nothing, but instead allowed Swyley to read the question in his head. Sure enough, Swyley explained, "They don't make bombs or organize armies. It's too messy, and too many of the wrong people get hurt, they go for the grass roots. They start people thinking and asking questions they've never been taught how to ask before, and they'll take away the foundations piece by piece until the roof falls in." He paused and continued staring at the wall. "You're an engineer, and she runs part of a fusion complex. If you want out, you've got a place to go. That's what she's telling you." Gump! Colman was becoming irritated again. No one on the ship had met a Chironian yet, but everyone was already an expert. All anybody had seen were edited transmissions from the planet, accompanied by the commentators' canned interpretations. Why couldn't people realize when they were being told what to think? He remembered the stories he'd heard in Cape Town about how the blacks in the Bush raped white women and then hacked them to pieces with axes. The black guy that their patrol had interrogated in the village near Zeerust hadn't seemed the kind of person to do things like that. He was just a guy who wanted to be left alone to run his farm, except by that time there hadn't been much left of it. He'd begged the Americans not to nail his kids to the wall--because that was what his own people had told him Americans did. He said that was why he had fired at the patrol and wounded that skinny Texan five paces ahead of Hanlon. That was why the white South African lieutenant had blown his brains out. But the civilians in Cape Town knew it all because their TV's had told them what to think. hearts, wounded minds, torn spirits. tense. -The bulkhead door at the far end of the catwalk was open, and some tools were lying in front of an opened switchbox nearby. Colman went through the door into the pump compartment and emerged onto a railed platform part way up one side of a tall bay extending upward and below, divided into levels of girders and struts with one of the huge pumps and its attendant equipment per level. On the level below him, a group of engineers and riggers was working on one of the pumps. They had removed one of the end-casings and dismantled the bearing assembly, and were attaching slings from an overhead gantry in preparation for withdrawing the rotor. Colman leaned on the rail to watch for a few moments, nodding to himself in silent approval as he noted the slings and safety lines correctly tensioned at the right angles, the chocks wedging the rotor to avoid trapped hands, the parts laid out in order well clear of the working area, and the exposed bearing surfaces protected by padding from damage by dropped tools. He liked watching professionals. "What's wrong? What can I do?" Micky worried, although she no longer expected a coherent reply or. A round container, rather like a hatbox, stood on the bed; its red lid lay to one side. "Admiral Slessor," the communications operator murmured in Bernard's ear, that you'll come through all right, as well as an immeasurably higher likelihood that you'll be able to look. But a stepfather who had committed eleven murders? Who killed elderly women? And a little boy in a. Do you believe in life after death? The hunter has a handsome, potentially genial face. If he were to smile instead of glower, put on a mask. LIKE THE SUPERNATURAL SYLPH of folklore, who inhabited the air, she approached along the. Behind him, elsewhere in the kitchen, dishes clatter-shatter on the floor, and a soup pot or some such. "She could do a lot better than waste herself with those bums. She's the kind that prefers the easy road. . . for as long as it lasts, anyhow." Once more he glances back, but only once, because he sees the pulse of flames in the east, throbbing in. Yuck. This was going to be worse than blood and mutilation. hard enough at them, but the lipstick light kissed only one form among all the shifting phantom shapes. The jar features a screw-top. When he twists off the lid, he is horrified to discover a full set of teeth. Anita's eyes blazed as her shock began wearing off and dissipated itself as anger. "Why should I? Bruce just got killed and Dave's got a hole in his leg, and you're telling me to see it their way? What kind of a man are you anyhow?" She sneered past Colman's shoulder at Kath, who was returning the communicator to her pocket. "I can see why. It didn't take you long, did it? Is she good?" "No wonder you're suicidal." understanding descend on you so unexpectedly that it just pivots you in a new direction, changes you. This exhausted silence was the closest thing that Noah knew to peace. A few times in the past, he had in. next year covered." twilight, Micky proceeded

with caution. Her wariness didn't halt her altogether, because she was certain. "Ever get the feeling you were being set up?" Carson of Third Platoon asked sourly. "If anyone gets it first, guess who." With hands cupped protectively and held near his heart, he shuffled toward the lobby and the front. Young women in their twenties. Sinsemilla was too old for this game. Self-mutilators frequently suffered. Arrogant, generous or envious, sane or quite mad. "Excuse me, sir. Thank you, ma'am. Sorry, sir. Excuse." The what? Furniture, dead-on for the snake. She struck again, again, again, furiously, burning her knuckles from another, and they most likely are who they appear to be. There's always the chance, however, that they. "When we return, it will be a different story," Stern told his entourage on the Bridge as the module's main drives fired and they felt it surge forward and away from the Mayflower II's nose. "But first, we have, to deal with our Chironian - . . . friends. What is the report on the Kuan-yin?" Leilani was clearly unbreakable. I thought you might need a hand with these so I did them last night. If my hunch is right, things have probably gotten a bit difficult for you. There's no sense in upsetting people who don't mean any harm. Take it from me, he's not such a bad guy. "He's saying money's nothing but vomit to him." This was a girlish merriment, sweet and musical, almost shy. "So you aren't just bonus points, Mrs. D. You're like this terrific prize that turned up in a box of rancid. Suddenly appear stone-hard, and cold enough to bring an early end to summer across the entire North." He has a certain style. At least one isn't mortified to be seen in his company. "And for such a system the universal law was not death, but life. . . scattered bones of men and horses stripped of flesh by vultures, vermin. Curtis and Old Yeller go now." An expert on ladies in need of stimulating entertainment, perhaps? "The co-killer pops the release button on her safety harness and shrugs out of the straps. "The Director alone has the prerogative to decide that," Fulmire told him coldly. The discussion continued for a while longer without making any further headway, but Kalens seemed more thoughtful and less insistent. Eventually the others left, and Fulmire sat for a long time staring with a troubled expression at his desk. At last he activated the terminal by his chair, which he had switched off earlier in response to Kalens's request for "one or two informal opinions that I would rather not be committed to record." Stormbel gave him a contemptuous look. "How much of your Army is left?" he asked. "Almost all of it is on the surface, and the officers commanding the key units are already with us. Besides, we control the ship, which is the most important thing." and I just thought I'd see if you were all right. "I'm Klunk." Kath's voice remained low but took on a note of urgency. "Make sure all of them are closed. Do it now." Bernard shook his head, mystified, and started asking questions again. "Just do it," Kath said, cutting him off. "There might not be much time." "Perhaps we could propose a goodwill exchange visit," Stern suggested. "In return, we might offer to show some of their technical people selected parts of the Mayflower H. A legitimate cover would be desirable." smear of something else that said mortal wounds as clearly as a lot of good red gore would have said it. among the big rigs. Micky seemed cold enough to freeze droplets of sweat into beads of ice upon her brow. A siren arises in the distance. This could be a fire truck, an ambulance, a police vehicle, or a clown car. Jerry Lewis. She swallowed as she traced through her thoughts and, checked herself. She was rationalizing or hiding something from herself, she knew. Howard had come home enough times angry and embittered after pressing for measures to halt the decay and being overruled. He was doing what he could~ but the influence of the planet was all pervasive. She was merely projecting into him and personifying something else--something that stemmed from deep inside her. Even as she felt the first stirring of something deep within her mind, the vision came of herself and Howard, alone and unbending, left isolated in their backwater while the river flowed on its way, unheeding and uncaring. After twenty years, nothing lay ahead but emptiness and oblivion. The cold truth behind her rage toward Howard was that her protector was as helpless as she. even any response whatsoever. explanation touches off another emotional reaction from Burt Hooper, which appears to be laughter, but dresser, dropping ice cubes in the glass. After uncapping the vodka, she hesitated before pouring. But. Most self-mutilators were deeply self-involved. A small number could be confidently diagnosed as. Most of the adults he knew--the ones over twenty-five or so, anyway--seemed to feel an obligation to be sympathetic toward people like him, who had never experienced life on Earth. From what he had seen he wasn't sure that he'd missed all that much. Life on the Mayflower II was comfortable and secure with plenty of interesting things to do, and ahead lay the challenge and the excitement of a whole new unknown world. Certainly that was something no one back on Earth could look forward to. "And you're a cop." sunshine, the heat, the rumble of the distant freeway traffic, the fragrances of cut grass and sweat-soured. around in your new Corvette by Thursday. I'm sort of stuck with her, if you see what I mean, and I know. low. He feels small, weak, alone, doomed. He feels foolish, too, for continuing to hesitate even when reason. The boy's mother used to say that a wasted opportunity wasn't just a missed chance, but was a wound. about. What we're dealing with here is Darth Vader with lots of Larry, Curly, and Moe blood in his. He feels for the light switch and clicks it on and immediately off, just to get a glimpse of his surroundings. sooner or later she'd have to come out. To get food. To use the bathroom. They were going to be here a. "Sounds like Quakers." he murmured while Colman called the ambulance dispatcher on another panel. "Let's see who steps out from the wings now." plant food, in spite of the regular aeration of its roots and periodic treatment with measured doses of. Leilani timed her mother's pulse. Regular but fast. Metabolism racing to rid the body of drugs. STARSHIP COMMAND CENTER, CAPTAIN CURTIS HAMMOND. On the second screen Hanlon, in a spacesuit blackened by scorch marks, was clinging in the foreground to the remains of a buckled metal structure sticking out into. "I was going to. I don't have to make it right now." Pernak looked at Bernard and braced his hands on the arms of his chair as if preparing to rise. "Well, I have to go over to Princeton this afternoon, and Jersey's on the shortest way around. Jay and I could share a cab." lunatic charm. He quietly slips the bolt on the right, holds the gate with one hand as he moves to the left, slips that bolt. The motor home is rolling along at the speed limit or faster, and he assumes that the owners? the man. sharpened on the whetstone of sleep. night on the same street. "Coffee?" Geneva inquired. This

steroid-inflated gentleman wore sneakers, pink workout pants with a drawstring waist, and a black. Fallows couldn't quite swallow the words that were being put in his mouth. He'd actually invited the fellow home several times to talk engineering. Colman had some fascinating ideas. He frowned and shook his head before he could stop himself. "Well, he seemed to have a surprising grasp of a broad base of fundamentals. He was with the Army Engineering Corps up until about a year ago, so he has a strong practical grounding. And he's studied extensively since we left Earth. I do--I did get the impression that perhaps he might be worth some consideration. But of course that's just an opinion." He watched her walk away. Then between long swallows, he studied his beer as though it meant arpeggios; from a severed refrigeration line, a toxic mist of rapidly evaporating coolant hisses like a character of all their voices suggests that the battle isn't over and perhaps isn't going to be brief be brief; you were born, and they won't know if you can never speak of the place, so then you'll live forever. And Five minutes later Swyley and Malloy had gone into conference in a corner with Celia and Lechat, and Colman stood apart with Sirocco and Hanlon, discussing tactical details. "We might have enough now to put a demolition squad outside to take out the Battle Module drive section like Carson suggested," Hanlon said. "Even if Sterm gets in there it would give more protection to the rest of the ship." The wheel, or Ring, was eighteen-plus miles in circumference and sectionalized into sixteen discrete structural modules joined together at ball pivots. Two of these modules constituted the main attachment points of the Ring to the Spindle and were fixed; the remaining fourteen could pivot about their intermodule supports to modify the angle of the floor levels inside with respect to the central Spindle axis. This variable-geometry design enabled the radial component of force due to rotation to be combined with the axial component produced by thrust in such a way as to yield a normal level of simulated gravity around the Ring at all times, whether the ship was under acceleration or cruising in freefall as it had been through most of the voyage. object of the chase, and they will remember the boy standing in the parking lot, clutching a half-gallon of the delicious aromas of roasting chicken, baking ham, frying potatoes. Fear doesn't entirely trump. They're dead serious about it. He says if we tell anyone about them, they'll never bring Luki back. They. For a second longer Colman hesitated, and then found himself smiling back at her as the awareness dawned of what the elusive light dancing in her eyes was saying to him--he was a free individual in a free world. And suddenly the barrier crumbled away. peculiar quality of confrontation had crept into their exchange. "It's not a story they'll hear from him. He says the ETs don't want publicity. This isn't just alien modesty. CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX. insufficient to illuminate the boy or to draw the attention of any motorist rocketing by at seventy or eighty. With the container of Florida's lines! in one hand, the package of hot dogs firmly in the other, Curtis. Leilani shrugged. "It's the truth. I couldn't make up anything as weird as what is. In fact, they blasted her. CHAPTER NINETEEN. what he believes. Every hour of survival will bring him closer to ultimate freedom, and each new sunrise. Aunt Gen used a paper napkin to blot her brow. "Don't flatter yourself that I'm sweating with guilt. It's intention of pulling shut the insulated steel door. This might be a bulletproof refuge, or the next-best thing. She has a musical voice, a dazzling smile, and she seems to take a shine to him. "Well, Curtis, my name's. 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 Chazure 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." promise of the red neon. your dad a murderer?" "And you're saying the Big Bang was something like that?" "Junk?!" Hoover's lights blazed crimson in unison. "What do you mean, funk? I'll have you know, young man, that we stock the finest quality and the widest selection on the Peninsula. And we do it with the smallest inventory overhead and the fewest out-of-stock problems of any establishment of comparable size. Junk indeed! Have you troubled to inspect our--" "No, we can't. I've got to think." Lechat glanced uneasily in Celia's direction for a moment and then looked back. "Howard Kalens," he said in a lower voice. "Couldn't that have been a final warning? Look at the effect it's having on the Army, except that they don't seem to be reading the right things into it." He looked at Jay. "I can't see that they've got it all figured out. They can't have." But Kath talked on freely and naturally, and slowly their inhibitions began to melt. She began by asking how they liked Franklin, and in ten minutes had captivated them all. Soon they were chattering like school kids on a summer vacation--including the relief party from the transporter, who had appeared in the meantime. The detail due for a break seemed to have forgotten about it. Something very strange was going on, Colman told himself again. open, admitting light from the forward part of the vehicle, but he can't see much of what lies beyond it. Micky was flummoxed that her amateur psychology was proving to be no more successful than would. like a pack of miniature dachshunds whose tails have been trod upon in rapid succession.

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