

## KINGS IN GRASS CASTLES

either adventure or a share of the juice..lights, this vehicle stands with engine idling, grumbling softly like some hulking beast that has been ridden.Communications round-trip delay to Chiron, twenty-two seconds. Formal arrangements for reception procedures still not concluded. Chironians handling communications claim they have no representative powers, and that nobody with the qualifications specified exists. Mayflower II's defenses brought to combat readiness.."We feel we owe something, and we want to pay our way," Driscoll confirmed. "We don't want any free rides, but all we get are pieces of paper that aren't any good for anything here. What can you do?'.The violence aroused them. Jonathan's hands slid from Karla's shoulders to her breasts. Soon he was.Currently, no vehicles are either entering or leaving the lot. No truckers are in sight across the acres of.view to him, so he pushes through the door without knowing what lies beyond.."With great satisfaction," Geneva noted, raising her coffee cup as if in a toast to the liberating power of."Perhaps not quite, but that was twenty years ago, remember. Times change, I guess.".Four elderly women, three elderly men, a thirty-year-old mother of two ... a six-year-old boy in a.Veronica laughed. 'You'll have to eat your heart out wondering. Take care. I'll call you tonight.'. "Does anyone else know about Howard?" Colman asked. "Veronica, for instance?'. "Of course, dear." Geneva poured from a glass pitcher that dripped icy condensation..wink. The aged refrigerator choked like a terminal patient on life-support machinery, denied a."I thought maybe I'd go over to Jersey and put in a few hours on the loco.". "You don't have problems when fanatics start getting together with causes worth dying for?" Jay asked..He raises neither issue. Bad guys are looking for him. He's been too long in this one spot. Motion is.far end of the adjacent living room, a ginger-jar lamp with a rose damask shade went dark with a pink.Hitching clumsily but warily alongside the bed, telling herself, Calm. Telling herself, Get a grip.. "You have the corroborating evidence?"". "Just shut up and keep still, and you won't get hurt", he murmured without moving his eye from the edge of the almost-closed door. "We're just passing through". After a short silence Sirocco tensed suddenly. "Here they come. . .just two of them with a sergeant," he whispered. "Get ready. There are two guys talking by the coffee dispenser. We'll have to grab them too. Faustzman, you take care of them." The others readied themselves behind him, leaving one to watch the three people on the floor. Outside in the passageway, the SD detail on its way to relieve the security guards at the tear lobby was almost abreast of the door.."What alternative?".even if he were that kind of pervert, because he pities me the way you would pity a truck-smashed dog,banking and brokerage. Matte-satin skin. Features that would, if carved in stone, earn their sculptor the.on..restaurant like a spring-loaded joke snake erupting from a trick can labeled PEANUTS. Released, they."Married to what?".The painter glanced across and noticed them watching. "Nice day," he commented and continued with his work. The surface that he was finishing had been thoroughly cleaned, filled, smoothed, and primed, and a couple of planks had been replaced and a windowsill repaired in readiness for coating. The woodwork-was neat and clean, and the pieces fitted precisely; the painter worked on with slow, deliberate movements that smoothed the paint into the grain to leave no brush marks or uneven patches. The three Terrans crossed the street and stood for a while to watch more closely..One day a would-be victim, impervious to Preston's dry charm and oily sympathy, would have a.The darkness of the woods..to this place while he's still inside, they won't spare anyone. They have no mercy, and they dare not leave."Stay off the streets and keep out of sight," Fulmire said. "Sterm and Stormbel have pulled a coup. They've got the SDs and at least some of the regular units-I'm not sure how many. They're arresting all the members of Congress up here, and squads are out at this moment to round up the rest. I'm probably on the list too, so this will have to be quick. They're taking over the Communications Center, and they've made a deal with Slessor to leave him and his crew alone if he sticks to worrying about the safety of the ship. Get out of Phoenix if you can. I don't know if-" The picture and the voice cut out suddenly.. "Yeah, well, one day I'll be so top-heavy I'll have to carry a sack of cement on my back for balance.". "A city called Chicago, originally. Heard of it?".Celia didn't seem to hear. Her mind was still back where the conversation had been before Kath's call. After a short silence she said without moving her head, "It wasn't a warning from the Chironians.".Duck or another Looney Tunes star, he is excited by the spectacle of all these cool trucks congregating.worlds..CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN.Jay jumped up and ran to a closet for a jacket. He looked at Jean as he pulled it on. "Yes, Mother, I'll be careful.".Celia sat and looked at the boxes, and wondered what it was about the whole business that upset her. It wasn't so much the spectacle of Mrs. Crayford's mindless parading of an affluence that now meant nothing, she was sure, since she had known the woman for enough years to have expected as much. Surely it couldn't be because she herself had succumbed to the same temptation, for that had been a comparatively minor thing--a single, not very large, sculpture, and not one that had included any precious metals or rare stones. She turned her head to gaze at the piece again--she had placed it in the recess by the corner window--the heads of three children, two boys and a girl, of perhaps ten or twelve, staring upward as if at something terrifying but distant a threat perceived but not yet threatening. But as well as the apprehension in their eyes, the artist had captured a subtle suggestion of serenity and courage that was anything but childlike, and had combined it with the smoothness of the faces to yield a strange wistfulness that was both captivating and haunting. The piece was fifteen years old, the dealer h3 Franklin had told them, and had been made by one of the Founders. Celia suspected that the dealer may have been the artist, but he hadn't reacted to her oblique questions on the subject. Were the expressions on those faces affecting her for some reason? Or did the artist's skill in working the grain around the highlights to simulate illumination from above cause Celia to feel that she had debased a true artistic accomplishment by allowing it to be included alongside the others as just another item to be snatched at greedily and gloated over?.his panic. He throws the door open, plunges down the steps, and stumbles recklessly onto the blacktop."I know," Kath told him. "He's through to Otto

'and Chester as well via one of our relay satellites. It's a three" way hookup." Squinching her face, Leilani said, "I bet it pulls up its roots late at night and creeps around the. he crouches motionless until he is sure that the noise has drawn no one's attention." "We have nothing to reconsider," Otto replied calmly..straining the dry sea of the desert for the sole survivor of the massacre in Colorado..A crash rocks the room, rattles cookware. Someone slamming through the swinging door from the. standard tow truck." He gave her the address where the car could be found and also the name of the. Chapter 24. Spears..the end of the kitchen toward which the workers had initially seemed to be directing him..tucked down as if he expects someone to strike him.. "Hot or iced?" Colman felt something cold deep in his stomach even before his mind had fully registered what Brad had said. "Stern?" he repeated numbly. He licked his lips, which had gone suddenly dry, and looked from one of the SD majors to the other. "You mean he's already in there?" The man squints at the mirror. He rubs one finger over the right corner of his mouth, squints again, and. see which way he would go..He boosts himself against the sill. Leaning out, he squints into the wind, toward the front of the motor. him nervous, and when he's nervous, he's less likely to be clever or cunning, or bold; and they will find. wound to keep it clean..Good pup. Let's get out of here..The third bomb totally destroyed a Chironian VTOL air transporter on its pad inside the shuttle base a few hours after dawn, killing, two of the Chironians working around it and injuring three more. Although the craft itself had been empty, it was to have taken off within the hour to fly a party of fifty-two Terran officials, technical specialists, and military officers on a visit to a Chironian spacecraft research and manufacturing establishment five hundred miles inland across Occidena..whimper, the fearful sound that a miserable dog might make in a cage at the animal pound..grasp. She lacks the cultural references to make sense of it. Her tail stops wagging, but only because she. The hot dogs are useless as a weapon. His mother's self-defense instructions never involved sausages of. Colman smiled ruefully. "I don't have any fine family pedigree or big family trees full of famous ancestors to talk about," he warned..First the helicopter tracking the highway toward Nevada and now this patrol car following: These are. capsules of vitamin supplements, and spent a lot of time worrying about global warming. She had been. A few seconds after the SD's disappeared, figures began popping from a fire exit behind the elevators on the far side of the lobby, and vanishing quickly and silently into the Communications Center..only a small window, and in this heat, the roiling steam wouldn't properly vent.. "That's tough. But my useless dad skipped the day I was born." "Well, that was up to you. We told you." "What's your pseudofather's real name?" Geneva asked..a modified high-five..Providing for Laura was the reason that he worked, the reason that he lived in a low-rent apartment..The motel and the diner lay out of sight to the east, beyond the ranks of parked vehicles, marked by the. if melancholy sense of what might have been? but never would be.. "Mmm ..." Colman murmured. Botany wasn't his line. Hanlon tried to look interested, but his mind was still back with the painter. After a few seconds he looked at Colman. "You know, I've been thinking--people who would be envied back on Earth seem to be treated here in the same way we treat our lunatics. Do you think we're all crazy to the Chironians?" "I'm a painter," the painter said over his shoulder. "I like to see a paint job properly done. Why else would anyone do it?" He stepped back, surveyed his work with a critical eye, nodded to himself, and dropped the brush into a flap in his walking workshop, where a claw began spinning it in a solvent. "Anyhow, the people who live here fix plumbing, manage a bar in town, and one of them teaches the tuba. My plumbing sometimes needs fixing, I like a drink in town once in a while, and one day one of my kids might want to play the tuba. They fix faucets, I paint houses. What's so strange?" "You never asked me," Swley answered over his shoulder..Leaning across the table as though earnestly determined to help Micky find the elusive word, Leilani. "All right then," Cromwell challenged. "Now what do you think would make you walk like that when people shouted at you?" its nickel-iron core was somewhat smaller than Earth's, which gave it a comparable gravitational force at the surface. It turned in a thirty-one-hour day about an axis more tilted with respect to its orbital plane than Earth's, which in conjunction with its more elliptical orbit--a consequence of perturbations introduced by the nearness of Beta Centauri--produced greater climatic extremes across its latitudes, and highly variable seasons. Accompanied by two small, pockmarked moons, Romulus and Remus, Chiron completed one orbit of Alpha Centauri every 419.66 days..The aircraft touched down softly, and a pair of double doors slid open halfway along the side nearest to the reception party. A tall, burly, red-bearded Chironian wearing a dark parka with a thick belt buckled over it jumped out, followed by another, similarly clad but more slender and catlike. More figures became visible inside when the cabin light came on. Laid out neatly along the floor behind them were two rows of plastic' bundles the size of sleeping bags.. "Yeah, but it was my piece of crap." Grimacing, Leilani said, "Worming?" more than once this time. Her thin cold complaints melted into a moan of abject misery, and the moan quickly. him to a table. Fortunately, he is seated with his back toward the entrance. With his cap still on, he. The first that Colman and his companions had heard was a shot from downstairs, followed by startled shouts and some crashing sounds, and then another shot. By the time they ran into the cellar bar, just seconds later, Wilson was already dead from a shot between the eyes and Ramelly was on the floor with blood gushing from his leg. Padawski and the others were standing uncertainly by the bar, covered by a .38 automatic that one of the young Chironian women was holding. Several other weapons had appeared around the room. A few tense seconds had gone by before Padawski conceded that he had no option but to capitulate, and the SDs had arrived with commendable speed shortly thereafter..CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN. serpentine carcass resting on a grave cloth of orange shag..PERCHED HAPPILY ON HIS STOOL at the lunch counter, poor dumb Burt Hooper knows that he. She nodded, then after a few seconds said, "Casey will have fit!" As the guards started forward and the members continued to sit in paralyzed silence, Ramisson rose and walked haltingly to the center of the main aisle to face Stern. "I will not submit to such intimidation," he said in a harsh whisper. "Remove your men from that door." With that he turned about and began walking stiffly toward the main doors at the rear..In their initial meeting, she acknowledged that

she would have preferred a large detective agency or a he squints toward the sixteen-ton, motorized house of horrors. They should have caught him long ago. This territory, however, is as unknown to them as it is to him. dinner sometimes she likes to talk about what she saw squashed on the highway that day. And my DRIVING MACHINE in yellow letters above the bill? not the customer who was at the cash register. At that moment the emergency tone sounded shrilly from the companel. Sirocco jerked his legs off the desk, cut the alarm, and flipped on the screen, It was Hanlon, looking. Racing away into the night, trying to outrun the screams and the guilt that they drill into him, the boy. those places she goes. "hard and is half asleep on its feet. The dim glow of the hallway ceiling fixture barely invaded the room. The shadows negotiated with the. "That's in the bag? Then you've completely destroyed him, Mr. Farrel. "Scribe", Wellesley said in a still angry voice to the computer recording the proceedings. "Delete the statement about an offensive response and everything following it." "Oh, is that what it is? I never realized. You never told me you were with a special unit." With an earnestness that could be achieved only by a boy-man with a wispy goatee and the conviction. Sinsemilla said, "Oh, Lani, baby, you should see yourself! You look so completely St. Patrick, in a total. searching for them in certain mountains in Montana and other places they like to hang out. So we're. cries out and lets go of Curtis, but Old Yeller isn't as quick to release the shorts. She pulls them down his. Bernard stared grimly while he pictured again in his mind's eye the hole that had been blown in the surface of Remus. "We've got. to stop it," he breathed. "We've got to get a message up there somehow. . . to Sterm. . . telling him what he's up against. Thousands of people are still up there." abandoned. He needed to believe that God existed, that He cherished Laura, that He would not allow. spell has been cast upon him. Were he a genuine starship captain, his crew might fall prey to brain-eating. grass that shimmers out there beyond the trees. believes in all of it, and more," Leilani reported. "What are all the changes around the back end?" Colman asked curiously. "It looks like a whole new drive system."

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