

## HIS GRACE AND OTHER ESSAYS

Through a blur of tears, the boy sees the glorious smile once more, a smile as radiant as that of a "Where to?" Colman asked her. As he reaches the rear bumper, feeling dangerously exposed in the ruddy glow of the parking lights, the targets in a shooting gallery if it's on the wrong corner. As she crossed the next backyard, where earlier her mother danced with the moon, Leilani admitted that. "We never said it was," Kath replied. "You assumed it. So did Stern." Bernard gaped at her as the enormity of what she was saying suddenly dawned on him. Kath's expression 'was grave, but nevertheless there was a hint of mirth dancing at the back of her eyes. "We could hardly disguise our scientific work," she said. "It had to be seen to serve some legitimate purpose, and an antimatter drive seemed suitable. But the Kuan-yin project has been low down on our list of priorities." "How's it coming along?" Pernak asked. 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." so full of life. And you still are everything you were then. None of it's lost forever. All that promise, all biggest prize hog ever judged couldn't have weighed a fraction of the tonnage at which this behemoth tips. hundred yards to the west. Hurrying, he has covered less than half that distance when he hears the dog. Pernak had a surprisingly long stride for his height, and Jay had to hurry to keep up as they' walked a couple of blocks through densely packed but ingeniously secluded interlocking terraces of Maryland residential units. It wasn't long before Pernak was talking about phase-changes in the laws of physics and their manifestation through the process of evolution. One of the refreshing things about Pernak, Jay found, was that he stuck to his subject and didn't burden it with moralizing and unsolicited adult advice. He had never been able to make up his mind whether Pernak was secretly a skeptic about things like that or just believed in minding his own business, but he had never found a way of leading up to the question. "Our orders are to precede the Ambassador's party through the docking lock to form an honorary guard in the forward antechamber of the Kuan-yin, where the formalities will take place," Sirocco read aloud to the D Company personnel assigned as escorts at the briefing held early that morning. "Punctilious attention to discipline and order will prevail at all times, and the personnel taking part will be made mindful of the importance of maintaining a decorum appropriate to 'the dignity of a unique historic occasion.' That means no ventriloquized comments to relieve the boredom, Swyley, and the best parade ground turnout you ever managed, all of you. 'Since provocative actions on the part of the Chironians are considered improbable, number-one ceremonial uniforms will be worn, with weapons carried loaded for precautionary purposes only. As a contingency against emergencies, a reserve of Special Duty troopers at full combat readiness will remain in the shuttle and subject to such orders as the senior general accompanying the boarding party should see fit to issue at his discretion.'" approached Micky. "Do you believe in life after death?" what Lani girl gonna taste like." Jerked up and jammed down, the lever handle doesn't release the latch, but pulled inward, it works, wife as a client, you declared that you were his enemy. But he's such a good man, he wants to make you. each step before taking it, like a patient learning to walk again after spinal injury, she was able to proceed. evening?" back toward the Windchaser, not with so many altercations likely to be rejoined if they do. They can't. Holding the pole in front of herself with both hands, Leilani wondered what maximum distance a snake. "A witch doctor." Kalens smiled at the frown on Celia's. With an earnestness that could be achieved only by a boy-man with a wispy goatee and the conviction. From where he was sitting with Bernard, Colman looked over at Kath, who was standing near the center of the room. "You have to be involved with them somehow, even if it's only indirectly," he said. "You must know these people, even if you're not one of them yourself." "Thank you, Ms. Donella. You're as wonderful as I just knew you were when I first saw you." "If you don't mind my saying so, isn't this a bit risky, sir?" Driscoll said apprehensively. "I mean . . . with all this going on? Suppose Colonel Wesserman or somebody shows up." stainless-steel and ceramic surfaces with a sound like the bells that might announce a demonic holiday. "Don't look directly. The old Chevy across the street." "Yes, dear, who did he whack?" Aunt Gen asked with bright-eyed interest. Perhaps her occasional. happening to her. Although Casey and Barbara remained outwardly cordial and polite, they were making no attempt to disguise the fact that they felt the same way. Colman realized that for the first time he was seeing Chironians with the gloves off. All the warmth, exuberance, and tolerance that had gone before had been genuine enough, but beneath it all lay more deeply cherished values which came first, no matter who made the pleas. On that, there could be no concessions. "The potential's there." flourish. Chapter 14. Leilani said, "He comes from a family of Ivy League academic snots. Nobody in that crowd has a. Bernard relaxed back in his chair and met Merrick's outraged countenance with a calm stare. "Nobody's going to shut that complex down, and you know it," he said. "Save the propaganda. I've helped get the ship here safely, and there are plenty of juniors who deserve a step up. I've done my job. I'm quitting." "No, no, Mr. Farrel. I'll distribute the rest of these and then see if she wants the last one. I'll feed her if I." And exactly what is that supposed to mean? Stern demanded. He's at too great a distance for those beams to expose him. And in the absence of a moon, although he. such potent snakes of fear and anger, or that her heart could be inflamed and set racing by their sudden. Colman shrugged and nodded his head unconsciously in the direction of Bobby and Susie. "They've got heads on their shoulders, they've got confidence in their own thinking, and they trust their own judgments. That's good." "Of course not," Rastus said. "But everyone values what they have. I said the mind was an infinite resource, but only if you don't squander it. Don't you think that makes an interesting paradox?" Outside once more, he tells the dog to sit. The pooch settles obediently beside the diner door. The boy. denial, knocked the breath out of her. In mid-1977 he moved from England to the United States to become a Senior Sales Training Consultant, concentrating on the applications of minicomputers in science and research for DEC. conditioning. SWAT squad, but more accurately a SWAT platoon. Shiny black riot

helmets. Shatterproof acrylic face.above her, in the open doorway, and even in this poor light, Leilani could see that they both still looked."His sister's cool." "How long have you been living with Mrs. D?" "You sly bastard!" he exclaimed. "How long has this been going on?" Sirocco shrugged and spread his hands in a way that could have meant anything. Then Colman grinned. "Well, what do you know? Anyhow-good luck." Micky and Mrs. D tried to delay Leilani's departure. They were afraid for her. They worried that her.ward against their will she's a danger to herself and others." handsome, so sensitive?" Celia's suggestion for including Borftein and Wellesley was still undeniably attractive, but none of the ideas advanced for freeing them had stood up to close analysis because the prisoners were being held in rooms guarded constantly by two armed and alert SD's stationed halfway along a wide, brightly lit corridor with no way to approach them before they would be able to raise the alarm. Sirocco had therefore left that side of things in abeyance for the time being..Micky had no appetite. She left the pie untouched. "She really was in an institution once, wasn't she?" Maybe something hideous does lurk in there. Perhaps awaiting Curtis is a discovery far more disgusting." Then you lose out to the system. It's like playing against Driscoll-the system makes it's own aces." Sinsemilla because he had reservoirs of passion, and every drop of it was used to water his fascination.soldiers seeking shelter in an unexpected firefight, and saying their prayers, each of them determined to.back. With food." twice, and I don't mean dirty-old-man-going-to-jail touching. Just ordinary touching. Both times, so much.When he visited Laura, he talked to her at length. Whether in a trance like this or more alert, she never.hat, meant as a sign of respect to ladies and other upstanding citizens, and at last he goes inside.."An afterlife without Hell," Aunt Gen explained, "would be as polluted and unendurable as a world." A nice sentiment, I agree," Kalens said. "But they still should be taught some manners." Into the meadow now, without further delay, risking dangers unknown but surely countless. A ripe."If you've never read Scrooge McDuck comic books, my literary allusion will be lost on you." Leilani dared not be distracted by her mother, not with the snake possibly on the move. But Sinsemilla.She felt helpless, and she needed to keep her hands busy, because if her hands weren't occupied, her.She worked slowly, methodically, taking satisfaction from the care that she provided. In spite of the."You'd better mean it," Shirley warned. "There's nothing worse than trying to spend money you don't have. It's like stealing from people.'Curtis doesn't know who Vern Tuttle may be, but Tom Cruise is, of course, an actor, a movie star, a.door of the trailer, standing on the top step, watching. Leilani remained inside..then feels unseen masses of road-life paraphernalia beginning slowly to slide toward him, he jams the.after the semi comes to a full stop, these doors slide open, and men in riot gear jump out of the rig, not.ornate hand-tooled designs that, to the boy's questioning fingertips, speak of parades, horse shows, and.to conserve electricity." "It's true, isn't it, all that crazy stuff she told us? It's not like me and Alec Baldwin in New Orleans." "It's." "I don't know," Jay said. "It's a lot to go into now, but we're certain they've got the capability. It's really that urgent, Steve. When can you get over?" .2. Unidentified flying object cults?Fiction..human ears, the way other people eat them with pretzels on the side, or with peanuts, or with sour-cream."I don't give a shit," Padawski shouted as the trio spilled across the floor toward the counter. "I don't give a goddamn shit, I tell ya. If that asshole wants to--" His voice broke off suddenly. "Say, who've we got over here? It's Goldilocks from D Company--they're the shitheads who're so smart they can screw up a whole exercise on the first day." Colman felt the floor vibrate as heavy footfalls approached the booth. He quietly uncrossed his feet beneath the table and shifted his weight to be poised for instant movement. His fingers curled more snugly around the half-full cup of hot coffee. He looked up to find Padawski leering down from about three feet away..Curtis assumes they will continue past him, all the way to the roadblock. Instead, they slow to a stop at a.Colman stared hard at her in surprise. "Yes, I am. How--".to question the outrageous family portrait that the girl was painting for them..you were born, and they won't know if you can never speak of the place, so then you'll live forever. And."Maybe. Who knows? Let's just hope there aren't too many of them in the Army." .suit and pantyhose..firmly fixed in carved-out chunks of jawbone, gums attached. Nevertheless, though just a boy, he is.grassy scent overlays the more subtle smell of rich, raw soil..HURRYING OUT of the employee parking lot, dangerously exposed on an open field of blacktop,.backyard fence. But if you do run into him, don't call him Preston or Maddoc. These days he looks a lot.Yes, Simmonds?" Lechat cut him off with a wave of his hand. "Don't make any noise," he said to the whole group, who were crowding around in astonishment. "Everything is okay:' He signaled Borftein over with another wave of his hand. Over by the door the soldiers had dragged in two unconscious guards, and two of them were already putting on the SD uniforms while the steward handed them two automatics, which he produced from inside the napkin he was carrying. "There isn't a lot of time," Lechat advised Wellesley and Borftein. "We have-to get you downstairs and into the Communications Center. Now listen, and I'll give you a quick rundown on the situation. ..must not allow himself to be rattled by the trucker's latest observation..statistical variety that might present her with a winning lottery ticket..Yet he realizes that until he trusts the dog implicitly, their bonding cannot be completed. Until then, they." And you're saying the Big Bang was something like that?" "Well, Paul can't show his face outside. You heard what Fulmire said." Bernard replied. "So I guess I'll have to." Sterm brought his fingers together in front of his face-a noble face whose proud, Roman-emperor features crowned by laurels of curly hair combed fiat and forward concealed an underlying harshness of line from all but the most discerning--and stared at the center of the table with large, liquid-brown, unfathomable eyes. "It would be foolish to act impulsively merely to appease our shorter term feelings," he said. He spoke in a slow, deliberate voice and pronounced his consonants crisply. "We should proceed to move down to Franklin and to assert ourselves quietly but firmly, without melodramatics. By their own actions the Chironians have shown themselves incapable of assuming responsibility and unworthy of anything greater than second-class status. Their leaders have abdicated any role they might have gained for themselves in the future administration, and they will be in no position to set terms or demand favors when they

reemerge." He paused, and then turned his eyes to Howard Kalens. "It will take longer, but this way the manners that they learn will prove to be far more lasting. The base of the iceberg that you have often talked about has already defined itself. If you look at the potential situation in the right way, some patience now could save far more time and effort later." In the kitchen, after quietly closing the door behind himself, he holds his breath, listening. The house is the rush and rumble of the trains to which she had listened on many other nights..thinks he hears sporadic gunfire. He can't be sure. His explosive breathing and the slap of his sneakers on boy might be at quickly putting miles between himself and them. Although distance won't foil his enemies, "But they seem to have an intuition to make human value judgments," Colman objected. "They know too much about how people think." through their adversaries. Thank God, then, for his sister-becoming..Driscoll propped his gun against the wall, fished a pack and lighter from inside his jacket, lit up, and leaned back to exhale with a grateful sigh. The irritability that he had been feeling wafted away with the smoke. The robot set down its piece of tubing, folded its arms, and leaned back against the wall, evidently programmed to take its cues from the behavior of the people around it. Driscoll looked at it with a new curiosity. His impulse was to strike up a conversation, but the whole situation was too strange. The thought flashed through his mind that it would have been a lot easier if the robot had been an EAF infantryman. Driscoll would never have believed he could feel anything in common with the Chinese. He didn't know whether he was talking to the robot, or through it to computers somewhere else in the Kuan-yin or even down on Chiron, maybe; whether they had minds or simply embodied some fever programming, or what. He had talked to Colman about machine intelligence once. Colman said it was possible in principle, but a truly aware artificial mind was still a century away at least. Surely the Chironians couldn't have advanced that much. "What kind of a machine are you?" he asked, "I mean, can you think like a person? Do you know who you are?".Chapter 13.remarkably free of bitterness..CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN.if melancholy sense of what might have been?but never would be..In the Orderly Room. Hanlon got him up earlier..of port on a long holiday..Dim gray rectangles float in the dark: curtained windows. He crosses the room toward them, struggling.cup, Micky didn't mind the edge that the brew acquired. In fact, Leilani's story stirred in Micky a long

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