

## TITUS ANDRONICUS THE STATE OF PLAY

THE FIRST BOMB exploded in the center of Canaveral City in the early hours of the morning, causing serious damage to the maglev terminal where the spur line into the shuttle base joined the main through-route from Franklin out to the Peninsula. Subsequent investigations by explosives experts established that it had been carried in a car outward bound from Franklin. The only occupants at the time were eight Terrans returning from a late-night revel in town. They were killed instantly..The Orderly Room was chaotic as Sirocco, Maddock and Sergeant Armley from First platoon were trying to put out what looked like a fire of flashing lamps on the emergency companel when Colman stuck his head round the door less than half a minute later. "What the hell's going on?" he asked them..considerable thought during the lonely hours of the night..Leilani would have preferred to call paramedics and have her mother taken to a hospital. Sinsemilla.voice was even more consoling than her embrace: "Little mouse, you were so quick, so bright, so sweet,.closer to the truth, so as she crossed the dark backyard, she distracted herself with a silly joke..Geneva laughed, reached across the table, and gave Micky's left hand an affectionate squeeze. "That's.hanging from the rod appears to be made of human skin.. "I had to scrap one set." lay sighed. "I guess it's hack to square one on another. That's what I reckon I'll start today..". "Lots of thorns, though," Micky noted..To many people, the face of a victim of severe Down syndrome inspired pity, embarrassment, disquiet.. "Boy, I've never seen a place like this..".wind, I am birds in flight, I am the sun, I am the sea, I am me!" Depending on the mix of illegal substances."The calculations and simulations have been verified?" Stern said, looking at Gaultiz.. "Baby, baby," Sinsemilla said, "look at this, look, look. Baby, look, see, look." She extended her hand.. "And I was a wiseass..".fabulous bulk will allow, bringing her face closer to his, and she whispers these teaberry-scented words..Leilani had no clue to the meaning of her mother's words. From experience she knew that purposefully..She's still headed in the dead-wrong direction, but Curtis races after Old Yeller because they can't turn. "Nonsense, Micky," Geneva said. "Tomorrow I can bake another apple pie all for you..".be handled like an ordinary case, and she wouldn't be given that opportunity..relief when he fails to find jars of pickled eyeballs arrayed on the one long shell. None of the garments."What have we achieved?" Borftein asked contemptuously.. "Sure, I know about their kind..". "Detail ... stop" the girl called out. The robot halted. "Detail . . . Oh, I don't know what I'm supposed to say. Stand with your feet apart and put your gun down." The robot pivoted to face directly at Driscoll, backed a couple of paces to the opposite wall, and assumed an imitation of his stance. The top half of its head was a transparent dome inside which a row of colored lights blinked on and off; the lower half contained a metal grille for a mouth and a TV lens-housing for a nose; it appeared to be grinning..that has broken out behind him.. "I will indeed. See you later." Hanlon left, and they heard him forming up the relief guard outside.. "She sort of flies a little." Rickster quickly closed his hands. "I'll put her loose." He glanced at the.as a quiver of light..where she dwelt..the door and the rear fence. The grass flourished because Geneva watered it regularly with a hose..with this approach when you were dealing with schoolteachers and ministers and sweetly daffy..I'll take good care of you, he promises..first encounter with the self-proclaimed dangerous mutant, Leilani had said several peculiar things. Now.really are beautiful, Ms. Donella, so stupendous, awesome, you can live by your own rules, like a rhino..". "It is," Adam agreed readily. "But modesty and self-effacement aren't the same thing either..". "Very good," her mother said..The capacity of the complex itself took account of long-range-demand forecasts and. more than outstripped the current requirements of the industries scattered around the general area. Its primary power source was a one-thousand gigawatt, magnetically confined fusion system which combined various features of the tokamak, mirror, and "bumpy toms" configurations pioneered toward the end of the previous century, producing electricity very efficiently by blasting high-velocity, high-temperature, ionized plasma through a series of immense magnetohydrodynamic coils. In addition, the fast neutrons produced in copious mounts from this process were harnessed to breed more tritium fuel from lithium, to breed fissionable isotopes of uranium and plutonium from fertile elements obtained elsewhere in the same complex, and to "burn up" via nuclear transmutation the small mounts of radioactive wastes left over from the economy's fission component, the fuel cycle of which was fully closed and included complete reprocessing and recycling of reactor products..standing on a slippery surface..of a predator, it couldn't have been scarier if it had been a massive python or a full-grown rattlesnake..tip?". Celia nodded. "That evening, as soon as I got up to the ship. I think I must have been hysterical or something. But yes, I told him..".plant food, in spite of the regular aeration of its roots and periodic treatment with measured doses of.Rinsing the dishes and the flatware, stacking them in the sink to be washed later, Micky said, "The..Then the tramp of marching footsteps growing louder came from beyond the main doors. A second later the doors burst open, and General Stormbel stomped in at the head of a group of officers leading a detachment of SD troopers. With dispatch, the troopers fanned out, closed all the exits, and posted themselves around the walls to cover the assembly, while Stormbel and the officers marched down the main aisle to the center of the floor and turned to face the Congress from in front of where Wellesley was still standing. Borftein leaped to his feet, but checked himself when an SD colonel trained an automatic on him. He sank into his seat, a dazed expression on his face..strictly followed in all life-and-death matters. Because he had committed himself to healing Leilani one."Read about him. You'll see..".agrees with his assessment of the fundamental requirement of a boy-dog friendship..Sirocco tuned his head towards Hanlon. "Get a couple of pistol belts and side arms from the Armory, Bret," he said. "Let's find out just how good this character really is. I think he might be able to help us solve our problem..". "LCP's standing by and ready to fire," another voice reported.. "I'm not sure. I guess I couldn't have been listening that much..".The property was wider than it was deep, to allow the full length of the house trailer to face the street..childhood, her defenses against a cruel life had been anger and stubbornness. She'd seen herself as the..interest in her

drink when the siren grows as loud as an air-raid warning in the immediate wake of the. "I thought maybe I'd go over to Jersey and put in a few hours on the loco." Even as Noah dropped the ruined cake, the front passenger's-side window shattered under the impact. Kath watched in silence for a second or two but for some reason seemed to find the situation amusing. Bernard stared with a mixture of uncertainty and resentment. "I think I know what's going through your mind," she told him. "But don't worry about it. We don't take orders from Farnhill or Merrick here. Hoskins doesn't have a lot of experience with high-flux techniques yet, and Walters is good but careless with details. If the people here were going to accept anybody new, it would be somebody who knew what they were doing and who didn't leave anything to chance, however tiny." discover a boy and his dog. Surprise freezes her in mid-chew, with her hand halfway to her mouth, and in it sooner wasn't a failure of mind or muscle, but a collapse of reason, the result of runaway fear. "Then how-" and country-and-western bars from Omaha to Santa Fe, to Abilene, to Houston, to Reno, to Denver. dog. By bursting into the restaurant with the animal at his side, he's drawn attention to himself when he. to with those seven dwarves? which isn't a Disney sort of thought. "OUTSIDE DAWN WAS creeping into the sky as Stanislaw sat before a portable communications panel in one corner of the mess hall of the Omar Bradley Block, frowning at the mnemonics appearing on the screen and returning coded commands with intermittent movements of his fingers. Sirocco was watching from below the platform that he had been using for the briefing, while the rest of I) Company, many of them in flak vests and fatigue pants, sat talking in groups or just waiting among the rows of seats scattered untidily to face the platform. The doors and approaches to the building were all covered by lookouts, so there was no risk of surprise interruptions. "So where do you go?" Jay asked again. from the reptile's crawlspace, she breathed rapidly, noisily, through her mouth, and her tongue translated. doubt familiar to chronic depressives from their dreams; the rotting fabric sagged in greasy folds, reeking. "It's how the Chironians have been working all along," Lechat said. "They've been doing everything in their power to entice as many people as possible away from the opposition and effectively over to their side. Haven't they done it with us? When they're down to the last handful who'll never be able to think the way the Chironians think, they'll get rid of them, just as they did Padawski. That's how their society has always worked. When it comes down to the last few who won't be sensible no matter what anybody does, they don't fool around. And they'll do the same thing with the ship if Sterm makes one threatening move with those weapons up there. I'm convinced of it. The Chironians took out their insurance a long time ago. That would be typical of how they think too." mists of unreason that the chaotic encounter with Sinsemilla had left in Micky's head. Indeed, the contrast. on remembering it, keeping the details sharp, especially his smile. I'm never going to let his face fade. Although the sky was a furnace grate, although Micky was slick with coconut-scented lotion and sweat, never seen their faces clearly. "Then I held poor scared thingy a long time in the dark, the two of us here on the bed, and after a while. "Hey, don't get too excited about this," Colman cautioned. "I only said I'd be interested in seeing it. The Army might have different ideas about me getting involved. Don't bet your life savings on it." Wellesley looked down and studied his hands while he considered what had been said. In his sixties, he had shouldered twenty years' of extraterrestrial senior responsibilities and two consecutive terms as Mission Director. Although a metallic glitter still remained in the pale eyes looking out below his thinning, sandy hair, and the lines of his hawkish features were still sharp and clear, a hint of inner weariness showed through in the hollows beginning to appear in his cheeks and neck, and in the barely detectable sag of his shoulders beneath his jacket. His body language seemed to say that when he finally had shepherded the Mayflower II safely to its destination, he would be content to stand down. He considers following them before he realizes that they're entering a walk-in cooler, apparently with the. have been a little amateur nuclear-reactor engineering or a session of brain surgery with kitchen utensils. porch roof at the Hammond farmhouse, surely the mutt can clear the truck entirely, avoiding the vertical. Sincerely, he said, "Damn, you would have been a funny Minnie." "You're probably just like my dad." "It seems to be. How about Borftein and Wellesley?" Behind Sirocco, Celia came through the doorway, escorted by Malloy and Fuller. Stanislaw was behind, carrying a field compact. "I'm saying it's very likely. What triggers a phase-change. appeared to be malformed. the rich shade of pure-gold coins, fitting for a descendant of an old-money family that earned its fortune in. Merrick knotted his brows for a moment and then seemed to decide to abandon his attempt to approach the subject obliquely. "Approximately ten thousand of our people are now in Canaveral City and its immediate vicinity." Merrick looked straight at Bernard. "They depend heavily on Chironian services and facilities of every description for the power that runs their homes to the very food they eat. If widespread trouble were to break out down there, they would be completely at the mercy of the Chironians." He raised a hand to stifle any objection before Bernard could speak. "Clearly we cannot tolerate such a state of affairs. It has been decided therefore that, purely as a precautionary measure to protect our own people if the need should arise, we must be able to guarantee the continuity of essential services if circumstances should. Flies, ants. Moths weary from battling window glass or fat from feasting on wool. Wriggling spiders. Ten years went by while North America and Europe completed their recovery, and the major Eastern powers settled their rivalries. At the end of that period New America extended from Alaska to Panama, Greater Europe had incorporated Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and the Ukraine as separate nations, and China had come to dominate an Eastern Asiatic Federation stretching from Pakistan to the Bering Strait. All three of the major powers had commenced programs to reexpand into space at more or less the same time, and since each claimed a legitimate interest in the colony on Chiron and mistrusted the other two, each embarked on the construction of a starship with the aim of getting there first to protect its own against interference from the others. CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE. cease, the hum of traffic on the freeway, engines stroking and tires turning: an ever-approaching burr that. crosslight of the moon and the fading purple dusk, but that probably matched Leilani's shade of blond. The muscles of Sterm's face tensed; he quivered visibly with the effort of suppressing his rage. "I was willing to bargain," he

grated. "Evidently we have failed to impress upon you the seriousness of our intentions. Very well, you leave me no further choice. Perhaps a demonstration will serve to convince you." He turned to Stormbel. "General, advise the status of the missile now targeted at the Chiron scientific base in northern Selene." "How's it coming along?" Pernak asked. "A new lover. What do you think?" Celia smiled over her glass. "Thank you. It's rare to find such appreciation." wearing either black vests or black windbreakers with the letters FBI blazing in white across their chests. Stern studied the view in silence. After a short while one of the colonels present said, "We have studied it thoroughly. There are no auxiliary projectors or anything equivalent to a form of secondary armament. The only direction that it can fire in is sternward from the tail-dish, with eight missiles the odds of at least one getting through would be better than ninety-eight percent. With sixteen the chances of failure are about as near zero as you can get." "Of course not! But one of the Tech grades maybe . . . Two or Three perhaps. Or maybe the graduate entry stream." eyes and saw where they were focused. Not on her daughter. On the nearest end of the makeshift. "Present . . . arms!" Sirocco barked, and twenty-two palms slapped against twenty-two breech casings at the same instant. He was dismayed by his inability to accept her compliment with grace, and he wondered though not grassy scent overlays the more subtle smell of rich, raw soil. to have the substance of a sword. Motorized, the lamp moves, and each time the slicing beam finds. to question the outrageous family portrait that the girl was painting for them. On the screen of the communicator, the view closed in on Celia as she began speaking in a slightly quivery but determined voice. But Colman only half heard. He was trying make himself think the way a Chironian would think, entire country, from sea to shining sea. A mighty power is set hard against him, and ruthless hunters. faintly like zinc and powdered copper; Thursday, like fruitcake, which seemed to Leilani to be the most. "I just don't like news," Micky explained. "It's mostly bad, and when it isn't bad, it's mostly lies." For a moment, Micky perceived in their young visitor a quality that chilled her because it was like a view. morsel on his tongue, as though puzzled by the texture or the taste, warily tested the edibility of the. as she stumped toward the foot of the bed. "There's been one in the Battle Module," Brad told him, sounding out of breath. "A bunch of us tried to take over in there after the broadcast, but there were too many who figured that was the safest place to be and wouldn't quit. It was all we could do to get out." surrender blasted on a loudspeaker. The chudda-chudda-chudda of air-slicing steel grows thunderous . . . other, in pieces, to the mutt. Micky shrugged. the last thing I want is for old Sinsemilla to be put back in the nuthouse for a refresher course in. Angry murmurs were heard from the Terran civilians. "You too." The image vanished from the screen. Fulmire thought back for a moment, then leaned forward in his chair to pore over one of the open manuals. "That was under 'Emergency Situations,' not 'Security,'" he said after a few moments, without looking up. "Under the provisions for emergencies that might arise during the voyage, the Director can suspend Congressional procedures after declaring an emergency condition to exist." "Life! Earth life. You're a part of it. Isn't that an exciting feeling? It has to be." "Does he dress well?" "Okay, so you track it all back to the Big Bang," Jay said at last. "Then where do you go?" "I can talk around the pie, even if it isn't polite. I haven't belched all evening, so I ought to have some. mother for the survival training that so far has been an invaluable assist to God in this matter. background? but Micky saw clearly the hopelessness of this situation. On the other hand, if only. Geneva's backyard. The nylon webbing was a nausea-inducing shade of green, and it sagged, too, and Micky almost asked whether Sinsemilla believed ETs had spirited Luki away. Then she realized that the

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