

THE POPE VOL 1 OF 3 A NOVEL

In a secluded wing high up in one of the towers of the Government Center, a white-jacketed steward, who had emigrated to America from London in his youth and had been recruited for the Mission as a result of a computer error, whistled tunelessly through his teeth while he wheeled a meal trolley stacked with used dishes toward the small catering facility that supplied food and refreshments for the conferences, meetings, and other functions held in that part of the complex. He didn't know what to make of the latest goings-on, and didn't care all that much about them, for that matter, either. It was all the same to him. First Wellesley was in, and they wanted twelve portions of chicken salad and dessert; then Wellesley was out and Sterm was in, and they wanted twelve portions of chicken salad and dessert. It didn't make any difference to him who-.Not long after Colman and Kath had sat down, Swyley's radar detected Sergeant Padawski and a handful from B Company entering the main door outside the bar. They were talking loudly and seemed to be a little the worse for drink. Colman noticed Artira and another girl from Brigade with them, clinging to the soldiers and acting brashly. He shook his head despairingly, but it wasn't really his business. After some tense moments of indecision and debate in the lobby the newcomers went downstairs without noticing the group from D Company. Then the party became more relaxed, and Colman soon forgot about them as some of Kath's acquaintances joined in ones' and twos, and the painter came across after recognizing Colman, having stopped by for a quick refresher on his way home some two hours previously..Bernard gave Jay a stern look. "You don't expect us to believe that, surely. Now, tell us where this stuff came from. I want the truth. If you've been up to something, I'll be willing to write it off as nothing more than planet fall getting to your head. Now--are you sure there isn't something you want to tell us?".but which seemed only impossibly difficult now.."That's monumentally romantic, Mrs. D, but as my mother's proved with numerous doper boyfriends, it stood on the cart..Snake; under there somewhere. When Leilani held her breath, she could hear the angry hissing. The..At any moment, however, one of them might retreat here to the bedroom. If a search by authorities..better if they thought the way the rules said they should, and no good if they didn't..fish for which so many nets have been cast..honey in the comb.."horse as they cross burning desert sands. After "Cool Water" comes a spate of advertisements, nothing..nature only from movies, books, and a few casual encounters..pity cripples, but they're afraid of mutants.".CHAPTER FIVE..Now, in the Utah night, he sits boldly in the Explorer and sings along with the catchy music on the radio..waiting under Leilani's bed, in her bed. She'll have no sanctuary, no peace. Every place will belong to the..Leilani in the house of Sinsemilla. Leilani limping ever closer to a bomb-clock birthday, ticking toward.."She's real protective," the boy assures him..and then even more solid, a whoosh and a thump combined, as a blade might sound if it could slice off..hadn't descended into the more disturbing realm where she sometimes became lost. In that even less..They stopped by a small open square, enclosed on three sides by buildings with striped canopies over their many balconies and flowery windows. A preacher from the Mayflower II, evidently anxious to make up for twenty years of lost time, was belaboring a mixed audience of Chironians from the corner of a raised wall surrounding a bank of shrubbery. He seemed especially incensed by the evidence of adolescent parenthood around him, existing and visibly imminent. The Chironians appeared curious but skeptical. Certainly there were no signs of any violent evangelical revivals about to take place, or of dramatic instant conversions among the listeners..on..linger after its visitation..He turned right and, within another block and a half, arrived at a tavern. Here he might not be able to..Colman grinned. "Good thinking. We were starting to talk shop." Re inclined his head to where Veronica was still talking animatedly between Kath's twin sons and evidently enjoying herself. "Somebody seems to be quite a hit over there.."an awkward job, but with determination, he succeeds. He slides one bolt into its hasp, then engages the..Sometimes dear Mater came complete with a mess to clean up. Leilani could handle messes. She didn't..forbidding than this one, he knows that sprinting flat-out through such terrain in twenty-percent humidity..savoring his ice cream while gazing out the window..Hesitantly, the intruder follows the mutt into Starship Command Center.."Shouldn't it?..To Tracy Devine, my editor, who never panics when, far past my deadline, I want to take yet more time.."Lock your doors.."in the constellation of Orion. He's here, like it or not, and if ever he has needed to draw strength from his..She knocked again.."Power. If you have enough power, you can bring even the richest men to their knees.."..share the risk and to leave her less exposed, "and then expect us not to care when we see the danger..At the front of the vehicle, the door opens, and the first things through it are the excited voices of a man..Geneva's backyard. The nylon webbing was a nausea-inducing shade of green, and it sagged, too, and..near the bed, and fills it with orange juice from the plastic jug..Constance Tavenall?no doubt soon to cleanse herself of the name Sharmer?stared at the TV. She..provided each of 'em with a room and a boyfriend. Anyway, who knows where any of those guys are..remarked with a delighted leer on his face. "It is, isn't it," Colman agreed dismally..Running with this strange blind exuberance, he loses all sense of distance and time, so he doesn't know.."Because the Book tells us we must.."..the scales. In a reek of scorched rubber, with one last attenuated grunt of protesting gears, it shudders to..carnival blaze of blockaded traffic and across a gradually rising wasteland of sand, scrub, shale..you a tale of woe that might wring pity even from the chicken she's eating, were the poor fowl still alive!..spirit sewn to spirit with the strong thread of Curtis's reckless trust..stopped panting..Inside the room, the captives looked around in surprise as muffled thuds sounded just outside the door. The steward who had just brought in the evening meal opened the door, and soldiers in battledress poured in. Wellesley gasped as he saw Lechat with them. "Paul!" he exclaimed. "Where have you been hiding? You're the only one they didn't pick up. What-".unnervingly intense interest.."We-we never believed that story," Bernard said weakly..Considering that this had just now become incontestably clear to Constance, her composure was..KATH STOPPED TALKING and leaned away to pour a drink from the carafe of wine on the

night table by the bed, and Colman lay back in the softness of the pillows to gaze contentedly round the room while he savored a warm, pleasant feeling of relaxation that he had not known for some time. It was a cosy, cheerfully feminine room, with lots of coverlets and satiny drapes, fluffy rugs, pastel colors, and homey knickknacks arranged on the shelves and ledges. In many ways it reminded him of Veronica's apartment in the Baltimore module. On the wall opposite was a photograph of two laughing, roguish-looking boys of about twelve, whom despite their years he recognized easily as Casey and Adam, and scattered about were more pictures which he assumed were of the rest of Kath's family. The one in a frame on the vanity resembled Adam, though not Casey so much, and was of a dark-haired, bearded man of about Colman's age. It had to be Leon, he guessed, though he had felt it better not to ask, more because of the restraints of his own culture than from any fear of disturbing Kath. The painting of a twentieth-century New England farm scene—given to her by one of her friends, Kath had said when he remarked on it—interested him. Since arriving on Chiron he had seen many such reminders of ways of life on Earth that nobody from Chiron had known. On asking about them, he had learned that a feeling of nostalgia for the planet that held their origins, known only second-hand via machines, was far from uncommon among the Chironians. Saturated with toxins, rising to check out their new circumstances, the boy says worriedly, "We've got to keep moving." Excited because this is a situation encountered in all the adventure stories that he loves. A gray-haired man in shirt-sleeves stepped forward from a group huddled outside one of the office doorways. "I am," he said, "McPherson-Communications and Datacenter Manager." After a short pause he added, "At your disposal." Irrationality in this trailer where genteel daffiness and screwball self-delusion had heretofore been the CLUMP, CLUMP, CLUMP, clump, clump, clump, clump, clump, clump, hurries after the dog. He's no longer screaming, but he's still sufficiently addled by fear to concede. Carson made it last night with a chick at Canaveral. "Who says?" Driscoll demanded. "There wasn't anything that Veronica could have done," Celia went on, "I wasn't looking for someone to unload a guilt-trip on. What I had to say was a lot bigger than that. The mind of the man who is now in control up there is as dangerous as it's possible to get—abnormally intelligent, in full command of all its faculties, and totally insane. Sterm believes himself to be infallible and invincible, and he'll stop at nothing. He's holding what's left of the Army because he has succeeded in selling them a lie. And I was the only person who could expose that lie. There won't be any autopsy revelations—the body has already been cremated." Celia looked briefly at each of them in turn and was met by appalled stares as they saw what Colman had already seen a few seconds before. Otto seemed to be the spokesman. He seemed anxious to reassure them. "We would only destroy the ship without warning if it were to commence launching and deploying its strategic weapons without warning," he told the Terrans. "It is a difficult matter to exercise exact judgment upon, but we feel the most likely course would be for Sterm to issue an ultimatum before resorting to direct action. After all, he would hardly stand to profit from destroying the very resources that he hopes to possess. Our intention has been to reserve our warning as a reply to that ultimatum. In the meantime his support will continue to wither, hopefully with the effect of making him better disposed toward being reasonable when the time comes." "I think so. I can find it anyway." Stanislaw touched in some commands, and immediately all references to C Company were replaced by references to D Company. Because the computer said so, D Company was now scheduled for transfer to the ship that evening, and C Company could have an undisturbed night in bed. Stanislaw promptly reset the references to their original forms. The best time to make the switch permanently would be later in the day, with less time for the wrong people to start asking wrong questions. . . . and tire iron. He focused on Karla's house, on the lighted window of an upstairs bedroom, where the gap. Cynicism soon turned to rebellion as more of the Terran population came to perceive Phoenix not as a protective enclave, but at worst a prison and at best a self-proclaimed lunatic asylum. Apartment units were found deserted and more faces vanished as expeditions to Franklin came increasingly to be one-way trips. Passports were issued and Terran travel restricted while all Chironians were allowed through the checkpoints freely by guards who had no way of knowing which were residents and which were not since none of them had registered. The sentries no longer cared all that much anyway; their looking the other way became chronic and more and more of them were found not to be at their posts when their relief showed up. An order was posted assigning at least one SD to every guard detail. The effectiveness of this measure was reduced to a large degree by a network of willing Chironians which materialized overnight to assist Terrans in evading their own guards. Paula was looking at him impishly. "Do you think you could beat mine?" she asked in a curious voice. Colman went through the motions of having to think back. "Yes . . . I think so. But I don't remember Swyley being around." "So are you," Colman insisted. "Chironian genes were dealt from the same deck as all the rest. So the codes were turned into electronics for a while, and then back into DNA. So what? A book that gets stored in the databank is still the same book when it comes out." "Bernard," Kath said quietly from the console screen. She wasn't sure that she could speak, but after a hesitation, she found her voice: "They'd have come for Wellesley and the Congress had tried to perpetuate the same injustices by eclipsing him with Borftein because he in4p't graduated from the right places or possessed the right credentials. They had tried to fob him off with the command of what they had seen as a proficient but small and unimportant corps of specialists. They had all paid too. Now they all knew who he was and where they stood. He had no regrets about Ramisson's death; it underlined the lesson more forcefully than any words could have done. He was only sorry he hadn't made a cleaner sweep by shooting them all. . . . was, by the current definition, a good citizen." "Oh, I figured you'd be around here somewhere." "Is this the guy who makes trains?" Anita asked. "Yeah. This is Jay. He's okay. . . . and smart." . . . case one of the congressman's minions coiled in a car outside, waiting to follow the woman, Noah must. Sirocco watched for a second longer, and then pulled himself together quickly, "Enjoy your vacation, Swyley?" he inquired with a note of forced sarcasm in his voice. "Failure to report for duty, absent without leave, desertion in the face of the enemy . . . the whole book, in fact. Well, consider yourselves

reprimanded, and sit down. There's a lot to go over, and we're all going to need some rest today. The situation is that-" Sirocco stopped speaking and looked curiously at the figure that he hadn't noticed before. Under the Britney Spears poster, in a tangle of sheets, sprawled facedown in bed, his head turned to check. "Army logic," Colman murmured..southwest. The westbound lanes are blocked by police vehicles that form a gate, and traffic is being. " ? but a bunch of hoovey that maybe has a second and more serious purpose," Micky suggested.. "The Director alone has the prerogative to decide that," Fulmire told him coldly..locales is entirely coincidental.. "You never know. The chances might be better after we reach Chiron," Sirocco said. Colman's transfer application had been turned down by Engineering. "With the population exploding like crazy, there might be all kinds of. Leading with her good leg, dragging her left, long-practiced grace abandoned, hard-won dignity lost.. When Curtis clarifies that he doesn't need to rest, but rather that he urgently needs to relieve himself, this. music of a charmer's flute.. But Micky's tendency wouldn't cause her to wander off forever into the spooky woods where Sinsemilla. "Am I supposed to feel that way?" "Payoff for what?".. communicate with the spirit world, sometimes just talking to herself.. windows along the sides of the vehicle and through a series of small skylights, enough yellow light from. steel and railroad ties, automobile transports, slat-sided trailers carrying livestock, tankers full of gasoline.. Currently, no vehicles are either entering or leaving the lot. No truckers are in sight across the acres of. mode, though her tail continues to wag gently.. unmarked by the violence that had changed her life. The unrevealed half of her face, pressed into the. If the snake had struck her face, it might have bitten her eye. It might have left her half blind.. wealth of vipers, all schooled in the knowledge of darkness, well practiced in deception.. could have charmed the snake of Eden into a mood of benign companionship. Gen's once golden hair. bottom of the trailer. He won't inadvertently get a glimpse of a boy-shape-dog-shape cowering in the. Little affected by the sudden change of light, the dog's vision adjusts at once. Previously lying on the bed, "You what?" Jean gasped, horrified.. Eve looked at' the car, which was waiting patiently, and then back at Pernak. "We're through, really,' she said. "Shall we carry on and see the town?".. hunkers in front of the mutt, pets him, scratches behind his ears, and says, "You wait right here. I'll be. When Noah stopped at the corner, the Navigator halted half a block behind him. The driver waited to. "A lot of people are starting to think he could have had those bombs planted. What do you think?".. under the wheels of the runaway SWAT transport.. Wendy sighed. "We all have our plights and pickles." "A scandalous exhibition!" he declared as he sliced a portion of melon cultivated in the Kansas module and added it to the fruits on the plate by his aperitif on the table before him. "Nobodies and Cretins, all of them. Not one of them had any representative powers worth speaking of. Yet ifs clear that a governing organization of some kind must exist, though God knows what kind of people it's made up of, judging from the state the town's in a total shambles. The only conclusion can be that they've gone to ground and won't come out, and the population as a whole is abetting them. I think John's right--if they're as good as inviting us to take over, we should do so and be done with it." "Me, on the other hand? I've got one pretty name followed by a clinker like Klunk. Half of me is sort of. On the bed, Sinsemilla romped, cheering one of the combatants, cursing the other, and though Leilani. To Fallows, Merrick always seemed to have been designed along the lines of a medieval Gothic cathedral. His long, narrow frame gave the same feeling of austere perpendicularity as aloof columns of gaunt, gray stone, and his sloping shoulders, downturned facial lines, diagonal eyebrows, and receding hairline angling upward in the middle to accentuate his pointed head, formed a 'composition of arches soaring piously toward the heavens and away from the mundane world of mortal affairs. And like a petrified frontage staring down through expressionless windows as it screened the sanctum within, his face seemed to form part of a shell interposed to keep outsiders at a respectful distance from whoever dwelt inside. Sometimes Fallows wondered if there really was anybody inside or if perhaps over the years the shell had assumed an autonomous existence and continued to function while whoever had once been in there had withered and died without anyone's noticing.. "Proceed, General," Farnhill said from the back. Inside the server were vanilla ice-cream sundaes with chocolate sauce, toasted coconut, and crowning. None of these people appears to be suspicious of him, and none seems likely to be one of the relentless. "But Iay's still got a point," Bernard said, glancing at his son and nodding "What about the people who won't use them?" "I wish I'd heard them back when I could've helped you." "That was all a long time ago, Aunt Gen." Jean glanced at the screen and then looked at Bernard. "Should we try calling her through Jeeves ... via the Chironian net? It shouldn't be affected, should it?".. though the farmhouse has become a carnival funhouse awchirl with bright flickering spooks.. Leilani had no clue to the meaning of her mother's words. From experience she knew that purposefully. Predators on the wooden highways overhead might be stalking him, leaping gracefully limb to limb, as. He smiled. "Lucky Mickey." Colman smiled ruefully. "I don't have any fine family pedigree or big family trees full of famous ancestors to talk about," he warned.. "Sucky," Aunt Gen said.. dazzle the cognoscenti, not with her beauty, but with her sterling reputation, making it less likely that. "Now, let's see what we've got here," Adam said, scooping up his hand and opening it into a narrow fan. On the other sides of the table, Paula, one of the civilian girls from the Mayflower II, and Chang, Adam's dark-skinned friend, did likewise.. progresses by hitch and twitch through the kitchen, cooks and bakers and salad-makers and dishwashers. Old Sinsemilla would never intentionally kill herself. She ate no red meat, restricted her smoking solely to. Colman hesitated for a second as he contrasted Adam's philosophy with the dogmas he was more used to hearing. "I, ah--I know a few people who would say that was petty arrogant," he ventured.. in fact, the reason that he lived at all.. A dog. Black and white. Shaggy.. Maybe the power of Curtis's panic is transmitted to Old Yeller. Just then, two Chironian girls strolled around the corner from the narrow corridor. They looked fresh and pretty in loose blouses worn over snug-fitting slacks, and had lightweight stretch-boots of some silvery, lustrous material. One of them had brown, wavy hair with a reddish tint to it, and looked as if she were in her mid-thirties; the other was a blonde of perhaps twenty-two. For a split second, Driscoll felt an instinctive twinge of apprehension at

the thought of looking ridiculous, but the girls showed no surprise. Instead they paused and looked at him not unpleasantly, but with a hint of reserve as if they wanted to smile but weren't quite sure if they should..Onward, quickly to the paved road, which leads north and south to points unknown. Either direction will.The suggestion was too extraordinary for Lechat to respond instantly. He looked from Pernak to Eve and back again, then laid his fork on his plate and sat back to digest the information.. "You're not a mutant.". "Look, I think Jay probably wants to talk about things you wouldn't be interested in," Colman said to Anita. "Why.terms.".Curtis, and my dad sent me in for some grub to go.". "Nonsense, Micky," Geneva said. "Tomorrow I can bake another apple pie all for you.".way deep into the flesh of her memory, beyond the hope of excision, and prickle as long as she lived..myself?"

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