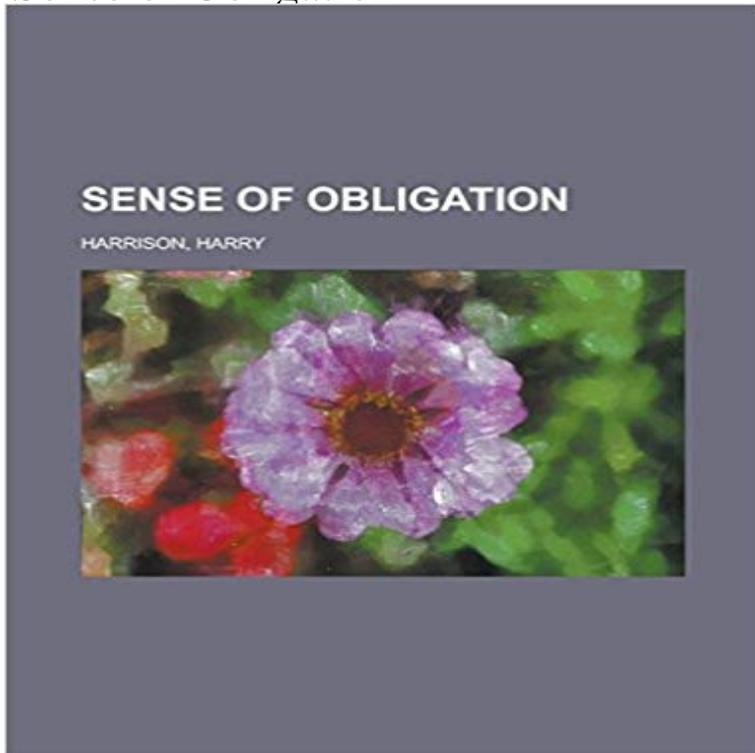


Sense of Obligation



Excerpt: ...The man with the knife had to win. With the next charge Brion changed tactics. He leaped inside the thrust, clutching for the knife arm. A burning slice of pain cut across his arm, then his fingers clutched the tendoned wrist. Clamped down hard, grinding shut, compressing with the tightening intensity of a closing vise. It was all he could do to simply hold on. There was no science in it, just his greater strength from exercise and existence on a heavier planet. All of this strength went to his clutching hand, because he held his own life in that hand, forcing away the knife that wanted to terminate it forever. Nothing else mattered. Neither the frightening force Pg 119 of the knees that thudded into his body nor the hooked fingers that reached for his eyes to tear them out. He protected his face as well as he could, while the nails tore furrows through his flesh and the cut on his arm bled freely. These were only minor things to be endured. His life depended on the grasp of the fingers of his right hand. There was a sudden immobility as he succeeded in clutching Lig-magtes other arm. It was a good grip and he could hold the arm immobilized. They had reached stasis, standing knee to knee, their faces only a few inches apart. The muffling cloth had fallen from the Disans face during the struggle and empty, frigid eyes stared into Brions. No flicker of emotion crossed the harsh planes of the other mans face. A great puckered white scar covered one cheek and pulled up a corner of the mouth in a cheerless grimace. It was false, there was still no expression here. Even when the pain must be growing more intense. Brion was winning

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