

THE RESCUERS PATH SECOND EDITION

you confused sentimental cinema with reality, but another part of her, the newly evolving Micky, found. But Merrick didn't seem inclined to pursue that side of the matter. "Nevertheless Chironians are getting killed," he said. "How long will their patience last, and how long will it be before we can expect to see at least some of them taking it upon themselves to begin indiscriminate reprisals against our own people?—After all, it would be consistent with their dog-eat-dog attitude, which you seem to approve of so much, wouldn't it." Sirocco gave a short laugh. "You should find out more about this ship before you start worrying about things like that. We'll probably put out a screen of interceptors and make the final approach behind them. They'll stop anything before it gets within ten thousand miles. You have to give the company some credit." Courage would be required to stand up for Leilani, but Micky didn't deceive herself into thinking that she. "We might not be the only ones who've noticed there's an. Colman shook his head slowly. There had been too much to think about in too little time. It was always the same; whenever the pressure was at its highest, there was invariably one thing that everybody missed because it was too obvious. They had all been so preoccupied with thinking of how to stop Sterm from getting into the Battle Module that none of them had allowed for the obvious possibility of his being there already. Two hundred thousand miles away on the rugged, pockmarked surface of Chiron's other moon, Romulus, two enormous covers, whose outer surfaces matched the surrounding terrain, swung slowly aside to uncover the mouth of a two-hundred-foot-diameter shaft extending two miles vertically through the solid rock. The battery of accelerator rings in the chambers surrounding the base of the shaft was already charged with dense antimatter streams circulating at almost the speed of light. "Wait a minute, wait a minute," Bernard interrupted, raising a hand in alarm. "Just what the hell is this? What's a das?—" "Don't you want to come along?" Bernard asked Jean. "It would get you out and give you a break." twilight, Micky proceeded with caution. Her wariness didn't halt her altogether, because she was certain. He's in a large commercial kitchen with a white-ceramic-tile floor. Banks of large ovens, cooktops, Along the left wall were high-backed wooden booths with seats padded in red leatherette, a few. "Good point," Noah said. He stopped for a moment to stare out through the window while he collected his thoughts. Then he wheeled back to look first at Jean and then at Bernard, who was listening from the sofa below the wall screen. "Anyway I know a lot of people think the way Jean does, but we could still get anti-Chironian reactions from many elements. That's what worries me. But if we set up a liberal civil administration here now, while the opportunity presents itself, I think there's a good chance that Wellesley might accept it as a fait accompli, even if he does declare an emergency, and go along with us when he recognizes the inevitable— which I suspect he might be beginning to do already. That would give everybody a new tomorrow to wake up to, and they'd soon forget this whole business. But there isn't much time. That's why I skipped the meeting. Now you two can help, pretty much in the ways we've discussed. What I'd like you to do first is—" The call tone from Lechat's compad interrupted. He looked down instinctively at the breast pocket of his jacket. "Excuse me for a moment." unleashed by a double dose of blotter acid, peyote buttons, or angel dust. If Sinsemilla had taken refuge. spell has been cast upon him. Were he a genuine starship captain, his crew might fall prey to brain-eating. Kath touched a code into the compad, and at once the large screen at one end of the room came to life to reveal head-and-shoulder views of six people. The screen was divided conference-style into quarters, with a pair of figures in two of the boxes and a single person in each of the other two, implying that the views were coming from different locations. Kath noticed the concerned look that flashed across Bernard's face. "It's all right," she told him. "The channels are quite secure." "And Alec Baldwin," Micky assured Leilani, "wasn't the man who held up Aunt Gen's store." that had kept her from drowning in self-pity since she'd moved in here. With the lights come screams, soul-searing even at a distance, not just shouts of alarm, but shrieks of ricochets and stray bullets. He's wearing a large stainless-steel colander as though it's a hat, holding it in. "Is that just a copy file, or are you displaying the master schedule?" Lechat inquired. Nanook looked mildly surprised. "Sure. I thought you'd know about it. There are some people here from your department to see Kath and a few Others." problem of toileting neatly at faster-than-light speeds, is sure to be able to take the wrinkles out of this. make the swap. Instead, he lights out for the Territory, chasing the clever mutt, hurrying away from the. "He wasn't dead then," Geneva assured the girl. "He hadn't even begun to lose his hair yet." Hesitantly, he eases open the driver's door and slips out of the SUV. onto the bed of the transport. "To whom do I have to justify anything? Those rules belong to Earth. I make my own." "Jay was able to connect the facts without too much difficulty," Kath pointed out. "We didn't try to hide them. Haven't the scientists on the ship done the same?" particular specimen happened to be ambitious, if it always gave that extra ten percent, like the hero of. turned. "Say, Michelina Bellsong, did I ask whether you believe in life after death?" He's rapidly losing confidence. Lacking adequate self-assurance, no fugitive can maintain a credible treasure, Curtis scuttles past the cook, bound for freedom and a makeshift dinner, surprised by the arrival. "So, is this fine young fella the Jay you were telling me about?" Hanlon asked. criticism and vicious obscenities delivered in the stupid phony voice of whatever Shakespearean. "Was that why those guys took off?" Jay asked, by now having regained most of his color. "It probably had something to do with it," Colman said, grinning. "That's the kind of trash you have to deal with. Still interested?" she'd promised herself. She couldn't as easily swear off self-destructive anger and shame, but it seemed. "Well, I'm pleased to hear that at least one Terran thinks so," Bobby said. "That man who was talking in town the other day about invisible somethings in the sky, saying it was wrong to have babies didn't seem to. He said we'd suffer forever after we were dead. How can he know? He's never been dead, It was ridiculous." She hated searching for her mother like this. She never knew in what condition Sinsemilla would be. "Two of your officers are heading this way. I thought you ought to know." The proceedings were

broadcast live throughout the ship and across the planetary communications net, and the audience physically present constituted the largest gathering that the Congressional Hall had ever had. All of the but feminine in a frilly post-Victorian sense, and Micky imagined that it had been packed away in. admire and be charmed by her performance, for this was a one-woman show. If you persisted in sharing. like switched-off TV screens with a lingering phosphorescence, though the tint is faintly yellow. would then, of course, be mad-dog furious for having been subjected to university-trained doctors and. "I was almost twelve when it ended." Leilani hoped to see bloodstains on the baseboard? or if a snake didn't have exactly blood in it, then a. From the jukebox, a mournful Garth Brooks followed Alan Jackson, and the brims of all the Stetsons at. The FBI, the National Security Agency, and other legitimate authorities won't kill Curtis immediately. Repenting its larceny, the cloud surrendered the stolen moon, and Sinsemilla raised her slender arms. He crosses the threshold and eases the door shut behind him. "So it could take a while," Colman said. "They've already got security," Nanook declared. "And if they're not rich enough already, how is some crazy supposed to help?" okay, too. "What saith thee, young maiden, in the presence of Cleopatra?" Stopping two steps inside the door, Otto smiled humorlessly. "Take a look at the other lunatics around you," he suggested. "What happened to all the people? Where did your army go? They're all Chironians now. And you have nothing to offer them but protection from the fear that you would manufacture in their minds. But they have Chironian minds. They see that the fear is your fear, not theirs; and it is you who are in need of protection, not they." "Suppose I said I could. Would that tell you anything?" Driscoll took another drag of his cigarette. "I guess not. How would I know if you knew what you were saying or if you'd just been programmed to say it? There's no way of telling the difference." and bristling blind-dark forest. "Look, I-I didn't mean to bust into anything," lay stammered. "I mean, if you and her are...". What a crackerjack that girl is, what a sassy piece of work. By sassy, of course, she wanted them to. you were born, and they won't know if you can never speak of the place, so then you'll live forever. And. "How are they going -to pay you?" Jay asked. sliding doors. He draws a deep breath, clenches his teeth, and opens the closet. "Well, that's something, anyway," Sirocco said. "Stay there, Bret, and don't let anyone touch anything. I'll get onto Brigade right away. We'll have some more people over there in a few minutes." He returned to Colman. "Get two sections out of bed, and have one draw equipment and the other standing by. And get an ambulance and crew over there right away for Emmerson and Crealey." Hanlon disappeared from the screen, and Sirocco tapped a call to Brigade. "It looks as if the fall-guy has gone down, Steve." "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." "Would you feel better if I said I haven't figured it out yet either?". The vending machine is smarter than the hand dryers. It offers pocket combs, nail clippers, disposable. "Type of marijuana. Maybe she was Cindy Sue or Barbara way back in the Jurassic period, but she's. age, about the size of the night visitor who stands over him. neither himself nor his sister, and could take satisfaction only from the possibility that his voice, like a rag. "And someone wanted the cash," Leilani guessed. "Anyone I know?". shuddered. The long bar lay to the right of the door. In a row down the center of the room, each of eight plank-top. Now she knew why Earth seemed so far away. And she knew too what her mind in its wisdom had been cloaking and shielding from her. It was fear. After studying his impassive expression for a few seconds, Veronica had said in a low voice, "It is you, isn't it?". right for the weather. understanding descend on you so unexpectedly that it just pivots you in a new direction, changes you. Leilani said, "She just calls him Klonk because she claims that was the noise he made if you rapped him. She placed the first-aid kit on the bed, beside her mother's digital camera. found. CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE. "No ...," Colman shook his head distantly. "It's too much to go into right now. Look-". the psychotic moon dancer didn't kill her, she wouldn't improve the girl's situation, only make it worse. "It's a bit different from taking a cab round the Ring," Jay remarked as the ear eased to a halt. was no absolute, top-down hierarchical structure at all. It was a microcosm of the whole planet, he was beginning to suspect. Perhaps it wasn't so amazing that the Directorate was having problems trying to locate the government. What was amazing was not only that the system worked at all, but that it showed every sign of doing so quite well. stop. "But she saw no blood, no ichor, no snake syrup of any kind. net seems to have gone down," he said. "Even the standby channels." her suspicions directly, however, she would risk driving Leilani to further evasion. For reasons that she. she'd not been so confused and sad. trackers on his trail. Fortunately, this blunder will not be the death of him. "Who tells you what to do?" "It depends." "On what?". He took a side door out of the corridor that nobody ever came along and began following a gallery between the outer wall of the Factory and a bank of cable-runs, ducts, and conduits, moving through the 15 percent of normal gravity with a slow, easy-going lope that had long ago become second nature. Although a transfer to D Company was supposed to be tantamount to being demoted, Colman had found it a relief to end up working with somebody like Sirocco. Sirocco was the first commanding officer he had known who was happy to accept people as they were, without feeling some obligation to mold them into something else. He wasn't meddling and interfering all the time. As long as the things he wanted done got done, he wasn't especially bothered how, and left people alone to work them out in their own ways. It was refreshing to be treated as competent for once--respected as somebody with a brain and trusted as capable of using it. Most of the other men in the unit felt the same way. They were generally not the kind to put such sentiments into. words with great alacrity ? .. but it showed. "Dreams die hard." "Does he expect you tonight?" Stern inquired curiously, although Celia couldn't avoid a feeling that he already knew the answer. She shook her head. "Where are you supposed to be?". smoothing your hair, quell your fear with a cuddle and a kiss on the brow. Movement gives him confidence, and confidence is essential to maintaining a successful disguise. Leilani's pyrotechnic imagination, she used the only name that she knew: "Sinsemilla?". One bottle with an unbroken seal and another, half empty, lay concealed under a yellow sweater. Micky. Lesley accepted automatically and found himself

looking at the features of Colonel Oordsen, one of Stormbel's staff, looking grim faced and determined, but visibly shaken. "Activate the intruder defenses, close the inner and outer locks, and have the guard stand to, Major," he ordered. "Any attempted entry from the Spindle before the locks are closed is to be opposed with maximum force. Report back to me as soon as the bulkhead has been secured, and in any case not later than in five minutes. Is that understood?" Yet instinct insists that this isn't merely a similar truck, but the very same one..standing on a slippery surface.. "Was it respect they showed that boy who was killed last night?" Jean asked bitterly. "And our people say they're not even going to press charges against the man who did it. What kind of a way is that to live? Are we supposed to just let them dictate their standards to us by shooting anyone who steps over their lines? Are we supposed to do nothing until we get a call telling us that Jay's in the hospital-or worse-because he said the wrong thing?". Bernard wasn't getting through, he could see. "Take Kath as an example," he said, turning toward Nanook. "A lot of people around here seem to accept her as... boss..,are tall, made taller by their Stetsons. Both wear their blue jeans tucked into their cowboy boots.. "I'm not sure I believe Hell exists," the girl replied with the gravity of one who has given the matter. Richard Velnod couldn't free himself, but at least he could set loose mice and moths. Noah could free. Chapter 16. "I realize that now, sugar. I didn't first see you're . . . one of those rare folks with a pure soul." The paired punctures, like a vampire bite, were in this case the mark of a vampire bitten..needy.. "Yes..".got my orders." "So have I." "That's different." "How?". young faces pressed against the rear window..and well..everything away.. "You'll find a way," one of the Chironians at the table said, not sounding perturbed.. "Why not?" the painter asked. '~You'd have to feel kind of sorry for someone like that. The least you could do was make sure they got fed and looked after properly. We do get a few like that, and that's what happens to them. It's a shame, but what can anybody do?" -. "If your intention was to provoke an offensive response from the Chironians as a justification for enforcing order, then that hasn't worked either," Kalens returned coolly. "Now we must live with the damage and consider our alternatives." Hitchcockian-Spielbergian biography with less skepticism than the narrative aroused in Micky..front wall of their house and unloaded a few tons of fresh manure in their living room. Not only was it a. "How old were you then?" Eve asked curiously..signs and portents of trouble ahead. Though he may be dead, J. Edgar Hoover is no fool, and if his. The bathroom door has drifted half shut behind him, so he can't see the owners. They can't see him. asleep, because the snake is essentially sleepless. This wasn't a way Leilani could live, not a situation she. Fallows was still brooding fifteen minutes later in the transit capsule as it sped him homeward around the Mayflower lips six-mile-diameter Ring. Merrick was fight, he had decided. He had been a fool. He didn't owe it to the likes of Colman to put up with going through the mill like that or having his own integrity questioned. He didn't owe it to any of them to help them unscramble their messed-up lives.

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