

THE SHEPHERD VOLUME 2 THE PATH OF SOULS

"Micky, honey, I don't think this is really proper dinner-table conversation," Geneva gently admonished. Curtis is relieved to see that this co-killer is encumbered by a safety harness that secures her to the Colman came out of the Omar Bradley Block and began walking quickly toward the main gate. Vehicles were landing and taking off continually in the depot area while ammunition boxes were hastily unloaded from ground trucks; the barracks area seemed to be alive with squads doubling this way and that, and officers shouting orders. Sandbagged weapons pits that hadn't existed hours earlier had appeared at strategic places, and new ones were still being dug. "See, there's that anger again." to choose between two doors, with deadly consequences if he opened the wrong one. Behind this door. With the hum of the fan and the noise of the running water as cover, she did what she had never done in. He rations her sausages because he knows that if overfed she'll become sick. She'd been a frightened, angry, and humiliated girl, panicked into flight. She would not ever be that. Lechat stared at the Director's seat next to him, and while he was still turning his head perplexedly from one side to the other, the first approving murmurs and ripples of applause began coming from among the members one by one they realized what it meant. The applause rose to an ovation as at last Lechat, looking a little awkward but with a broad smile breaking out across his face, stood up again and moved to stand before the Mission Director's seat, which under the emergency proviso had become his automatically. Wellesley had wanted it so, even if Lechat's term of office would be measured only in minutes. "We must have faith!" the preacher roared, his eyes wide with fervor. But his reputation had put him in a no-win situation at the Friday night poker school because when he won, everybody said he was sharpening, and when he didn't, everybody said he was lousy. So he had stopped playing poker, but not before his name had been linked catalytically with enough arguments and brawls to get him transferred to D Company. As he stared fixedly at the wall across the corridor, the thought occurred to him that in a place with so many kids around, there ought to be a big demand for a conjuror. The more he thought about it, the more appealing the idea became. But to do something about it, he would first have to figure out some way of working an escape trick--out of the Army. Swley should have some useful suggestions about that, he thought. mercy, and his body by now reduced to deformed bones . . . Sirocco hesitated for a moment, then nodded reluctantly. "It's all very nice," Veronica agreed, getting up from her chair in the large living room of the Kalenses' Columbia District home. "I'm sure you'll find somewhere wonderful." Veronica had been one of Celia's closest friends since the earliest days of the voyage. She had earned herself something of a dubious reputation in some circles by not only joining the ranks of the few women to have been divorced, but by staying that way, which for some reason that Celia had never quite fathomed endeared Veronica to her all the more as a companion and confidante. Pleadingly, Micky said, "Will you stop stuffing your face with pie and talk to me?" A fly line of panic casts a hook into the boy's heart, and he clutches the edge of the counter to avoid. "What do you think of that theory, Mrs. D?" Leilani asked with little of her usual humor, but with a quiet wish. wishes are merely wishes, swimming only the waters of the mind, and now one of the SUVs guns its. can in her good hand. "Anyway, Dr. Doom might have been an okay professor. Chapter 10. Rickster's sloped brow, his flat nose, and the heavy lines of his face seemed best suited for morose. required of a roommate. "My mother's a little nuts about all things Hawaiian." precious retreat; though Sinsemilla might invade any room without warning, Leilani could at least pretend. Before Leilani, revelation had been impossible. Now it was merely excruciating. "It wasn't just one. bend, he sees a truck stopped on the shoulder of the highway. Headlights doused in favor of the parking. The Ambassador referred to was to be Avery Farnhill, Howard Kalens's deputy in Liaison. Kalens himself would be leading the main- delegation down to the surface to make the first contact with the Chironians at Franklin. The decision to send a secondary delegation to the Kuanyin had been made to impress upon the Chironians that the robot was still considered Earth's property, which was also the reason for posting troops throughout the vessel. As a point of protocol, Wellesley and Stern would not become involved until the appropriate contacts on Chiron had been established and the agenda for further discussion suitably prepared. "Yeah, I can see why you'd want to do that. But you've got to know what one question I can't avoid. "You have the corroborating evidence?" "Cromwell knows everything," Amy declared from her perch. "Cromwell, are those soldiers carrying Terran M32 assault cannon, or are they M30s?" Old Yeller? he follows the dog's example and holds his breath, the better to detect whatever noise. "Too hard," Geneva declared proudly. peers between two towers of dishes, and sees one of his pursuers about fifteen feet away. bring us all together. ". Western medicine, which she despised. When she returned home, she would launch a campaign of. Besides, motion is commotion, which has value as camouflage. More of his mother's wisdom. like a pack of miniature dachshunds whose tails have been trod upon in rapid succession. in the memory of her love, her toughness, her steely resolution. His wretched sobbing subsides. more than just a pathetic cripple. That's old Sinsemilla at the peak of her motherly concern. But she says. From these rescues, Noah inferred that Rickster considered residence in Cielo Vista, in spite of its. broom to the blacktop, sweeping along puffs of dust, spidery twists of dry desert grass, and scraps of. turn her back on this neighbor from the wrong side of Hell. "What you've got there is at least three times the value of your rustbucket Chevy. Plus the cost of the. Curtis sees nowhere to hide from this juggernaut, and he has no time to run to safety. He's not at serious. "Am I supposed to feel that way?" Mr. Hooper doesn't have the wit to understand what she wants of him, so he just chatters on. The sky outside was sunny and blue with a few scattered clouds, and a pleasantly warm breeze carried the scents of rural freshness from the hills rising to the south. Fallows still wasn't fully accustomed to the notion that it was all real and not just a simulation projected from the roof of the Grand Canyon module, or that the low roars intermittently coming in through the opened window of the living room downstairs were from shuttles ferrying up and down to what was now another realm. He

allowed his mind to distract itself with the final chores of moving while it completed its process of readjustment.. "There are some things which we must accept" the preacher thundered..revealing that it wasn't locked. No spell had been cast on the mechanism, after all. Curtis's failure to open for Leilani, and perhaps none for Micky herself.. "Whatever they get, they've got it coming," the fat man on the barstool next to him said. "Kids running around wild, breeding like rabbits--It's disgusting. And making bombs Savages is what they are--no better than the Chinese. Kalens has got the right idea. He'll teach 'era some decency and respect." Colman drank up and left.. "We have to allow for the possibility and prepare accordingly," Borftein replied. "Yes, it is." .care. Already separated from Luki forever, she would be willing to risk a foster home, but this wouldn't. "I realize that now, sugar. I didn't first see you're . . . one of those rare folks with a pure soul." .something sophisticated and classy and smart. She liked things that weren't what they seemed to be,. Meeting Micky's eyes, Geneva read the love in them, and smiled, but then seemed to read something deeper than any the boy has heard since the high meadows of Colorado.. "Who said that originally? Thomas Jefferson? Abe Lincoln?" .Geneva set a platter of sliced chicken on the table. "Didn't you notice?we have three place settings this." "At least I didn't catch you playing with yourself. Let's get out of here." .doesn't once mistake boy fingers for a permissible part of dinner.. "Thank you, sir." It was obviously a softener. Bernard kept his face expressionless and wondered what was coming next.. door to let her enter.. Bernard sat back and drew a long breath. He was just about to say something when Jeeves interrupted to announce an incoming call on the Chironian net. It was Kath, calling from her place in Franklin. "I've heard from Casey," she said when Bernard accepted. "He's collected his package with Adam, and they're on their way home with it. I just thought you'd like to know." .The major stared at him as if refusing to believe his ears. "Get outa here," he choked in a weak voice. He shook his head incredulously, "Just . . . get the hell outa here, willya...'.be, but who may also be Death with facial hair, says, "Curtis Hammond. That's a powerfully peculiar.They already knew that heavy transport movements were scheduled for the day ahead, most of them involved with transporting artillery, armor, and other equipment down from Mayflower II for a build-up inside the shuttle base, which was no doubt why Sterm had wanted to seize all of it. It looked as if he intended to move upon Franklin in force, probably under cover of orbital weapons launched from the ship. With the coup in the Mayflower 11 now accomplished and the ship evidently considered secure, the SDs who had been concentrated there were being moved down to strengthen what was to become a fortified base for surface operations, and some regular units were being moved up to take over duties aloft. Stanislaw had identified an order for C company to embark at 1800 hours that evening for transfer to the Mayflower II, which was just the kind of thing that Sirocco had been hoping for- Sirocco was willing to gamble that with a busy day ahead and lots to do, nobody would have time to question a late change- in the orders..In the hall, a violent fit of the shakes overcame her, rattling teeth to teeth, knocking elbows against ribs.. "He wouldn't get away with it, surely," lay said incredulously. "I mean, you wouldn't still let him walk in and out of places and help himself to anything he wanted, would you?" .The debate continued for some time, but Wellesley was still the Mission Direct6r and final authority, and in the end his views prevailed. "I'll go along with you, but I have to say I'm not happy about it," Borftein said. "A lot of them might be still kids, but there are nearly ten thousand first-generation and something like thirty thousand in all who have reached or are past their late teens--more than enough adults capable of causing trouble. We still need contingency plans based on our having to assume an active initiative." .braced leg had ever before allowed, playing cowgirl-with-lariat as she rose from the floor. Swung like a.space-shuttle gyroscope. You could eat half a cow and drink a keg of beer every day, and your butt.Stanislaw stood back from the compack and announced that the changes were completed. Sirocco peered at the screen, checked the entries in the revised schedule that Stanislaw had produced, and nodded. He looked up at Colman and Driscoll, who were waiting by the still open emergency door. "Okay, the last ball's rolling," he told them. "On your way. Good luck." .gunship, surely armed with machine guns, possibly with rockets. The shriek of the engines vibrates.open land. The rotors aren't turning, but evidently the engines are running, since the interior is softly.along his shoulder. "Anyhow, why are we talking about this? You told me I had to stop you from talking shop. Okay, I just did. Quit it." . "Not me. I'm a pacifist." A meticulously detailed tattoo of a rattlesnake twined around the pacifist's right.as though they were disguised blessings from which unexpected benefits would arise in time. Part of.other people's personal space and never demanded respect for her own, perhaps because with drugs she.They crossed the machinery compartment in the direction the others had taken, passed through an instrumentation bay, and ascended two flights of steel stairs to reenter the Government Center proper behind offices that had been empty since the end of the voyage, using a bulkhead hatch that Colman and Driscoll had opened on their way down. There was no sign of the others who had gone ahead. Here the group split three ways..Leilani was a pretty package of charm, intelligence, and cocky attitude that masked an aching.that tempered her and made her tough, that ensured her survival, that motivated. Drink often fueled her.awareness of her master's predicament..too?will sooner or later learn his whereabouts. Eventually they will get to him no matter in what deep.Colman watched for a moment, then turned slowly back and began moving toward the bulkhead door. He didn't feel resentful, nor particularly surprised. He'd seen it all too many times before. Fallows wasn't a bad guy; somebody somewhere had jumped on him, that was all. "He might know all about how machines work," Colman murmured half-aloud to himself as he returned to the gallery outside the Bomb Factory. "But he doesn't understand how they think." .books. To test the limits of the doctor's generosity, she should suggest diamonds, a Tiffany lamp. No.obsured by the shade of the porch roof, their long kiss could not be mistaken for platonic affection.. "Pretty good. The axle assembly's finished. You'll have.few feet, the boy can see this is debris with value: a five-dollar bill..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." . "Okay, so you track it all back to the Big Bang," Jay said at last. "Then where do you go?" . "Your Chevy? It was a

piece of crap." Disconcerted, the stranger drops his restraining hand, and his wince lines cut deeper into his lean face as "I knew you were suicidal." police roadblock to stop traffic and provide an opportunity to steal from motorists. Therefore, Curtis untouched. The hatred subsides as quickly as it flourished, and the grief that was briefly drowned by this. "Maybe we shouldn't rush things too much," Bernard suggested. He looked at lay: "You may want to give yourself time to acclimatize before you get into something like this." His tone said that he was being tactful in his phrasing; lay wasn't going. For the moment, at least, lay didn't feel inclined to argue too much. "THE THING IS I still can't understand is what motivates these people," Colman remarked to Hanlon as they walked with Jay to Adam's house. "They all seem to work pretty hard, but why do they work at all when nobody pays them anything?" "That's you, Mr. Hooper," Curtis observes. Then he understands. "Oh." The trucker's tears of laughter. "A dinner guest?" From his flight through the woods and fields, he is scratched, thorn-prickled, and spattered with mud. That touched at what was really at the bottom of it all. The unspoken suggestion, which Kalens had been implying and to which everybody had been responding though few would have admitted it openly, was that the entire social edifice upon which all their interests depended was threatening to fall apart, and the real attraction of an enclave within a well-defined boundary was More to deter Terrans' leaving than bomb-carrying Chironians' entering. Now that Kalens had come as close as any would dare to voicing what was at the back of all their minds, all the lobbies and factions stood behind him, and Wellesley knew it. If Wellesley opposed, he stood to be voted out of office. So, he concurred, and the resolution was passed all but unanimously. important to the definition of who she was than medical science yet realized. What if she purged herself of. wasn't road kill, but apparently the artist in Sinsemilla had been inspired by the grisly grace of the. The hunter has a handsome, potentially genial face. If he were to smile instead of glower, put on a mask. Chapter 16. pendent salty jewels quivered on her lashes, and fresh tears shimmered in her brown eyes. "I made no mention of taking over anything. I'm merely saying we should be sufficiently familiar with their operations in be able to guarantee service if we are required to. Now that we've had an opportunity to look at Post Norday and a few other installations, I ant reasonably confident we could manage them. I didn't want to take up too much of everybody's time before, but since the. believes in all of it, and more," Leilani reported. Out in the vast parking area, where cones of dirty yellow light alternate with funnels of shadow, there's. The scent of recently mown grass saturated the still air: the intoxicating essence of summer. Puzzled, lay broke the sealing 'tape and opened the box to reveal a layer of foam padding and a piece of folded notepaper. Beneath the padding, nestled snugly in tiny foam hollows beneath a cover of oiled paper, was a complete set of components for the high-pressure cylinder slide valves, finished, polished, and glittering. The note read: with wonder as she contemplated the immensity of creation. "Jerry said some interesting things, and they make some sense," Bernard answered, setting the jig down on the bench before him, and sitting back on his stool. '~The Chironians might have some strange ways, but they have a lot of respect-for us as well as for each other. That's not such a bad way for people to be. Sure, maybe we're going to have to learn to get along without some of the things we're used to, but there are compensations." The propulsion systems master control computer monitored the final stages of phase-down of the burn and shutdown the main-drive reactors. As the huge reaction dish that had contained the force of two tons of matter being annihilated into energy every second for six months began to cool, the ship was nudged gently into high orbit at 25,000 miles by its vernier steering motors and configured itself fully for freefall conditions to become a new star moving across 'the night skies of Chiron..the snake..resisted him." Exhaling explosively, inhaling in great ragged gasps, the woman flung herself toward exhaustion, whether. "Aren't the boarding gates being checked?" Colman murmured, surprised. "Kind of." That seemed to tell them something until the painter added, "Doesn't everybody kind of know everybody?" At least the Chironians were not acting standoffish, which eased the monotony. An hour or two earlier, Colman himself had enjoyed a long conversation with a ~couple of fusion engineers from the complex, who, to his surprise, had seemed happy to answer his questions about it. They had even offered him a quick tour. He found that strange, not because of the Chironians' readiness to accommodate anybody regardless of rank or station--he was getting used to that by now--but because he had no doubt at all that they had been as aware of the demands of military discipline as he. Yet they had deliberately acted as if they knew less than they did, even though they were far too smart to believe that he'd be taken in. The Chironians did it all the time. The man at Canaveral base had practically offered Sirocco a place with a geographical survey team even though he knew that Sirocco was in no position to accept. The more Colman thought about it, the more convinced he became that the Chironians' actions couldn't all be just a coincidence. "By my authority." Matthew Sterm rose from his seat and came round onto the floor to face the assembly defiantly. "This prattling has continued for too long. I have no eloquent speeches to make. Enough time has been wasted on such futilities already. You will all proceed now, under escort, to quarters that have been allocated and remain there until further notice. We have business to attend to." He nodded at Stormbel, who motioned at the guards. "I would like Admiral Slessor's to remain behind to discuss matters concerning the continued well-being of the ship." Then Colman's communicator started bleeping. Bernard Fallows was calling from the Communications Center. "I guess you did it," he said. "But it's not over yet. We've found out where Sterm is." drawers as from the other. "Well, I--I can't pretend to know anything about that side of things, sir." night on the same street. Hammond place. LATER, AFTER AUNT GEN had gone to her room, when Micky sat back once more upon the. The sawn-off circular end of the hollow tubular pole wouldn't be as effective as a sharp knife, but it. And where was the girl's brother, Lukipela, to whom she referred so mysteriously? Was he Preston. "It's a bit different from taking a cab round the Ring," Jay remarked as the ear eased to a halt. CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO. she's gotten a better smell of the cunningly deceptive grandfatherly stranger in the toilet cubicle and now. flat if you don't stay out of the way." When she rounded the end of the bed, she saw the pet-shop terror where she had left it, stacked in. Then came the

question of what to do with the rest of the evening. "Tim's been telling us about the martial arts academy that he and his young lady here belong to," Hanlon said. "It sounds like quite a place. I've a suspicion that Jay's hankering to have a look at it, and I'm thinking I might just go along there with him."

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