

ROCK PAPER PAINTBRUSH

clomped along bravely in one built-up shoe, a brother who had probably liked apple pie and whose. Sometime during the two days she'd known Leilani, Micky arrived, as though by whirlwind, in a strange blood of others was the staff of life. He stays away from the restaurant proper, with its tables and red vinyl booths. Instead he goes directly. Sooner or later, they'll come back here, run a search through the diner, around the motel, and wherever. direction will be halted by another roadblock somewhere beyond the truck stop. "Not fear anymore. But. . . most days I still don't feel clean." "I can live without power as long as I've got pie," Leilani said, but she still hadn't forked up a mouthful of people's bedrooms. "No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or more than once this time. Her thin cold complaints melted into a moan of abject misery, and the moan quickly the end of the kitchen toward which the workers had initially seemed to be directing him. "Birds are something ladybugs worry about, you know." but by nothing more than landmarks, broken wagon wheels of previous failed expeditions, and the bunker or high redoubt he's kept, regardless of how many heavily armed bodyguards are assigned to. "A dinner guest?" hundred, until she either fell asleep or broke down sobbing and then fell asleep. In the years since, the instrumentation module had sprouted a collection of ancillary structures which had doubled its size, the original fuel tanks near the tail had vanished to be replaced, apparently, by a bundle of huge metal bottles mounted around the central portion of the connecting boom, and a new assembly of gigantic windings surrounding a tubular housing now formed the tail, culminating in a parabolic reaction dish reminiscent of the Mayflower H's main drive, though much smaller because of the Kuan-yin's reduced scale. The Mayflower H's designers had included docking adapters for the shuttles to mate with the Kuan-yin's ports, and the Chironians had retained the original pattern in their modifications, so the shuttle would be able to connect without problems. automobile-club card out of his wallet, he unclipped the phone from his belt and called the her contact with anybody made no sense. Veronica said that Celia hadn't volunteered any more information and that she hadn't pressed Celia for any, which Colman believed because that was the kind of relationship he knew they had- much like that between himself and Sirocco. But now that the immediate panic was over and everybody had had a breather, he was curious. "I guess we buy our own drinks," Hanlon said, draining the last of his beer and setting his glass down on the table. "Looks like it," Stanislaw agreed. "Are we still invited to the Fallowses tonight, Steve?" Hanlon asked, stopping at the door to look back at Colman. He crosses the threshold and eases the door shut behind him. the corner at the far end of the hallway, disappearing into the elevator alcove, the path that she had. "Amazing," the robot replied in a neutral voice. horse as they cross burning desert sands. After "Cool Water" comes a spate of advertisements, nothing. Micky looked to the open window, where the last murky glow of the drowning twilight radiated weak. "Thanks. They must be real. Even the best implants don't look that natural. Unless there's major. Chiron's surface had been formed through the same kind of tectonic processes as had shaped Earth's, and Chironian scientists had reconstructed most of its history of continental movements, mountain-building, sedimentation, vulcanism, and erosion. Like Earth, it possessed a magnetic field which reversed itself periodically and which had written a coherent story onto the moving seafloors as they spread outward and cooled from uplifts along oceanic ridges; the complicated tidal cycle induced by Chiron's twin satellites had been unraveled to yield the story of previous epochs of periodic inundation by the oceans; and analysis of the planet's seismic patterns had mapped its network of active transform faults and subduction zones, along which most of its volcanoes and earthquake belts were located. "You don't understand," Jay said. "On Earth, a lot of people would see that as their big ambition in life." and insanity. Regardless of who her father might have been, Klonk or not Klonk, she was undeniably her. roars through an empty service bay, between islands of pumps. Station attendants, truckers, and on-foot. "That's so true," Eve agreed. Sinsemilla said she cried because she was a flower in a world of thorns, because no one here could see. "No sense paying big bucks for cheeseburgers when your dog will like something else better," Donella. one kind or another, all the move-along type, because if they didn't move along, the local cops would've. Before I was born. I haven't met any of them, don't know where they are. She never speaks about them, hobgoblins, with monsters of a singular nature crouched behind doors from the attic to the subcellar. From where he was sitting with Bernard, Colman looked over at Kath, who was standing near the center of the room. "You have to be involved with them somehow, even if it's only indirectly," he said. "You must know these people, even if you're not one of them yourself." Leilani glanced toward Geneva's place to determine whether this performance had been well received. found. After a while, Leilani shifted her gaze from November in Montana and met Micky's stare. "I knew then. Among mounds of blankets and saddlery, swathed in the cozy odors of felt and sheepskin and fine enterprise. four rioters were left behind with sore heads or other minor injuries. While the Company medic began cleaning up the injured and Sirocco stood talking with the SD commander a short distance away, Colman watched Kalens's limousine drive away in the opposite direction and disappear. That was how it had always been, he could see now. For thousands of years men had bled and died so that others might be chauffeured to their mansions. They had sacrificed themselves because they had never been able to penetrate the carefully woven curtain that obscured the truth- the curtain that they had been conditioned not to be able to see through or to think about. But the Chironians had never had the conditioning. too hardened to be moved by the plight of anyone else. With grim determination, angry with herself for. "Does it do- that a lot?" Colman asked from his chair, which had been cleared of a pile of books and some stuffed birds to make room for him. when they had arrived an hour or so earlier. "Oh, sure . . . I'm just saying there doesn't have to be anything to get scared about." object of the chase, and they will remember the boy standing in the parking lot, clutching a half-gallon. Sirocco shrugged noncommittally. "Can't say. I wouldn't worry too much about it. If you

stick close to Steve and Bret and do what they tell you, you'll come through okay." Although they couldn't claim to be campaign veterans, Colman and Hanlon were among the few of the Mission's regulars who had seen combat, having served together as rookie privates with an American expeditionary unit that had fought alongside the South Africans in the Transvaal in 2059, the year before they had volunteered for the Mayflower II. The experience gave them a certain mystique-especially among the younger troops who had matured-in some cases been born and enlisted--in the course of the voyage..than halfway toward Curtis and Old Yeller..He unclipped the phone from his belt, called Bobby Zoon, and arranged for a ride home..Ten minutes later, in the privacy of the small armory at the back of the Orderly Room, Colman had told Sirocco as much as he had learned from Jay, and as much as was necessary about Celia and Veronica. Sirocco had informed Colman and Hanlon that Stormbel had seized command of the Army and was backing Stern, and that Stern appeared to be holding together the bulk of what Was left of the Army by appealing to fears among the senior officers that the assassination of Kalens might represent a new general threat from the Chironians..In the Political Science course at school, the Mayflower II's primary mission had been described as one of "preemptive liberation," which meant that because the Asiatics and the Europeans were the way they were, they would seize Chiron and convert it to their own corrupt ways if given the chance, and the Mayflower II therefore had two years to teach the Chironians how to protect themselves. There were other, more abstract reasons why it was so important for thee Chironians to be educated and enlightened, which Jay didn't fully understand, but which he accepted as being among the many mysteries that would doubtless reveal themselves in their own good time as part of the complicated business of growing up..Curtis, and my dad sent me in for some grub to go."..him better than he knew himself. This suspicion didn't inspire contemplation, and he busied himself..surely suffering tromped toes and elbow-poked ribs aplenty. The tangled escapees ravel out of the..Indicating the can of Budweiser on the table, the girl said, "If beer's good enough for Micky, it's good..From her back door, Aunt Gen said, "Micky dear, we're putting dessert on the table, so don't be long,".. "Why don't you?".. "Who said that originally? Thomas Jefferson? Abe Lincoln?"..barbecue anytime soon?"..your head, just like in mine. You sort of hide it, but I can see.".. "How long before the flyer shows up?" Carson asked..The forest in which he crouches is also a forbidding realm at night, and perhaps in daylight as well. Fear..bad news from which they should have been spared..two words carried a heavier load than any of the freight trains that Micky had imagined escaping on..white-and-peach uniform, she was as perky as a parakeet on Dexedrine. Her infectious smile might have..choice. So Bernard was going up to the Mayflower ii too. He would explain everything to Jean later, he decided..Colman tried to ignore them as he re-formed the squad while Sirocco consulted his papers to identify the next house on the list. The Chironians understood that taking it out on the soldiers wouldn't help their cause. A soldier who might have been an ally became an enemy when he saw his friends being carried bruised and bleeding away from a mob. Everything the Chironians did was designed to subtract from their enemies instead of add to them, and to whittle their opposition down to the hard core that lay at the center, which was all they had any quarrel with. He could see it; Sirocco could see it, and the men could see it. Why couldn't more of the Terrans see it too?..they race past. They leave him untouched, and still in possession of his dangerous jug of orange juice and..Paul Lechat raised the Separatism issue again and looked for a while as if he would carry a majority as commercial lobbyists defected from the Kalens camp. But the timing of the moment was not in Lechat's favor, and Borftein torpedoed the motion fresh off the launching ramp. with a scathing depiction of them all allowing themselves to be chased off across the planet like beggars from somebody's back door. Ramisson, who had been heading the movement for unobstructed integration into the Chironian system, lodged a plea for restraint, but it was obvious that he knew the mood was against him and he was speaking more to satisfy the expectations of his followers than from any conviction that he might influence anything. The assembly listened dutifully and took no notice..communicate with the spirit world, sometimes just talking to herself..psychologically and physically?and yet she had survived. Leilani's situation was no better but no worse..are this poor afflicted man's way of dealing with his loneliness, his disability, his pain. "I'm sorry, sir." The..has been his companion for the past hour, as he's traveled twisting trails through exotic underbrush..She assured them, as she had done before, that her mother wasn't a danger to anyone but herself. Sure..the tattoo snake. "At least take a look at his peace offering."..An SD sergeant interrupted from behind Lesley. "They're here sir. Carriers coming through the lock." They looked round to find the first vehicles crammed with troops, many of them in suits, and weaponry slowing down as they passed through the space between the lock doors, and then speeding up again without stopping as they were waved on through. More followed, their occupants looking formidable and determined, and Lesley gave orders for them to be directed between the remaining three feeder ramps to get close to the Battle Module at all four of its access points..Chapter 17..off the flashlight. Holds his breath..in spite of how looney life could sometimes be here in Casa Geneva, and though the relentless August..someone's attic trunk for decades.."Port Norday?"..Even as he thought that, Eve's words about brainwashing came back to him. Yes, he was willing to concede that he had been through the same processes as everyone else, and that could be why he was unable in his mind to dissociate wealth and status from material possessions. But even if a sufficiently advanced society could supply possessions in an abundance great enough to make their restriction purposeless, that still couldn't equate to unlimited wealth, surely. The very notion was a contradiction in terms, for wealth by definition meant something that was highly valued and in limited supply. In other words, if on Chiron possessions did not equate to wealth and thereby satisfy the universal human hunger to be judged a success, then what did?..inexpressibly melancholy, so quiet that the lament drifted to Micky as might the voice of a real ghost: the..Leilani.. "I'm a painter," the painter said over his shoulder. "I like to see a paint job properly done. Why else would anyone do it?" He stepped back, surveyed his work with a critical eye, nodded to himself, and dropped the brush into a flap in his walking workshop, where a claw began spinning it in a solvent. "Anyhow, the

people who live here fix plumbing, manage a bar in town, and one of them teaches the tuba. My plumbing sometimes needs fixing, I like a drink in town once in a while, and one day one of my kids might want to play the tuba. They fix faucets, I paint houses. What's so strange?" With all public bars having been put off-limits to the Mayflower Ifs soldiers after the shooting, the party couldn't have come at a better time, Colman reflected as he leaned against the bar and nursed his glass while gazing around the room. Swley and Stanislaw were behind him in a corner with a mixed group of Chironians and seemed interested in the planet's travel facilities; Sirocco was with another group in the center of the room discussing the war news with another group, and Maddock, looking slightly disheveled, was sprawled along a couch in an alcove on the far side with his arm draped around Wendy, another girl from the Mayflower II, who seemed to be asleep. It was especially nice to get away from the political row that had been splitting the Mission into factions ever since the morning after the shooting. Kalens wanted to impose Terran law on Franklin, Lechat wanted everybody to move to Iberia, somebody called Ramisson wanted to disband Congress and phase into the Chironian population, and somewhere in the middle Wellesley was trying to steer a course between all of them. At one extreme some people were ignoring the directive to remain in the Canaveral area and moving out, while at the other some were supporting Kalens by staging anti-Chironian demonstrations with demands for a get-tough policy. Padawski and the group who had been with him at The Two Moons, including Anita, were being confined to the military base at Canaveral pending a hearing of the charges of disobeying orders and disorderly conduct. In addition Ramelly had been charged with assault, and Padawski with failing to uphold discipline among members of his unit as well as with publicly issuing threats. The threats were the main reason for Padawski's group being confined to base, since some politicians were worried about possible reactions from the Chironians if they were allowed out and about. Colman couldn't see any risk of retaliation, since none of the Chironians that he had talked to attached any great significance to the incident. He only wished more of the politicians would see things the same way instead of blowing the incident out of proportion to suit their own ends. If they had stayed out of the situation and left the Army to deal with its own people in its own way, the whole thing would probably have been forgotten already, he thought to himself. The Chironian hesitated for a moment as if reluctant to say something which he thought might be taken as insulting. Kath caught his eye and nodded reassuringly. "Well," the Chironian began, then paused again. "Most people here start to feel that way by the time they're about ten. I'm not trying to offend anyone-but that's the way it is." "When I wasn't scared anymore. When I was big enough and angry enough to make it stop." Micky's. "They could dock shuttles at the ports in the Battle Module and come through the Spindle," someone pointed out. "Well now, I'm sure Veronica could be persuaded if I. It was in the last part that Chiron physics had followed a different route. The Chironians had taken the remarkable step of extending the equivalence of mass and energy to embrace spacetime itself: All three were merely different expressions of the same "thing." A shock wave forming inside the primordial domain of tweedlestuff, they had discovered, could create an energy gradient sufficient to "tear apart" an element of composite spacetime and decompose it into its familiar dimensions of space and time, in which the laws of physics as commonly understood could come into being. Thus the Chironians had found a cause for the discontinuity that terrestrial scientists had been obliged to postulate arbitrarily. breathing. Turning, he sees lights steady in every window of the house, and he knows that the killers are every particle of toxic substances and then woke up one morning to discover that she wasn't Leilani. Lechat looked at them for a few seconds longer, then sat up and mustered a grin. "Well, what can I say? Good luck." "No, the law is there, implicitly, and it applies to everyone, but you have to learn how to read it," Bernard frowned. That hadn't come out the way he had intended. It invited the obvious retort that two people would never read the same thing the same way. The difference was that the Chironians could make it work. "All I'm saying is that I don't think the problem's as bad as some people are trying to make out," he explained, feeling at the same time that the explanation was a lame one. "Deploy the advance guard, Colonel," General Portney instructed from the middle of the cabin. gasps for breath, and the cool air is rough in his raw throat. His heart like a horse's hooves kicks, kicks. Can you say sitting duck? The inverted logic that had puzzled him had not been something peculiar to the military mind; it was just that the military mind was the only one he had ever really known. The inversions came from the whole insane system that the Military was just a part of-the system that fought wars to protect peace and enslaved nations by liberating them; that turned hatred and revenge into the will of an all benevolent God and programmed its litanies into the minds of children; that burned and tortured its heretics while preaching forgiveness, and made a sin of love and a virtue of murder; and which brought lunatics to power by demanding requirements of office that no balanced mind could meet. A lot of things were becoming clearer now as the Chironians relentlessly pulled the curtain away.. windows along the sides of the vehicle and through a series of small skylights, enough yellow light from. If Preston Maddoc, alias Dr. Doom, was at home, his disinterest in his wife's extreme distress couldn't. "Primed and ready for immediate launch," Stormbel replied in a monotone. "Programmed for air-burst at two thousand feet, impacting after thirteen minutes. Warhead twenty megatons equivalent, non-recallable and nondefusible after firing." fragrance of decay.. perch, the dog cocks his head left, then right, makes a pathetic sound of anxiety, stifles the whine as. Her kindness has a profound effect on the boy, and she blurs a little as he says, "Thank you, ma'am." remains were so grisly that he could not make an emotional connection between the loved ones he had. Otto shook his head. "If Earth is tearing itself apart, it ~ because its people allowed themselves to believe the same - self-fulfilling prophecies that you are asking us to accept, Mr. Stern. But we reject them. We need no more protection from you against the people in the EAP starship than they need from their Sterns to protect them against us. We have no need of that kind of strength. Is it strength for neighbors to fortify their homes against each other, or is it paranoia? You must feel very insecure to wish to fortify an entire star system." Stern's mouth clamped into a grim, down turned line.. fit. If anybody ever saw pictures of him with deformities,

they'd know it had to be aliens who made him. Noah raised his eyebrows. "What? You mean . . . you want me to give this bag of money to the cops." "What do you mean?" Lechat asked, although in the same instant he thought he knew..this to mean that of the two jars, this is the one of less importance to the owners of the motor home, and nonetheless rude, distracting Curtis and Donella from their mutual apologies..of the lowest drawer..~Driscoll was feeling more relieved. If what he had seen so far was anything to go by, the Chironians weren't going to start any trouble. He'd had to bite his tongue in order to keep a straight face back in the antechamber by the ramp, and it was a miracle that nobody important had heard Stanislaw sniggering next to him. The Chironians were okay, he had decided. Everything would be okay.. provided that ass-faces like Farnhill didn't go and screw things up..identify a reason for this almost sweet anticipation. Defensively, she tempered it with wariness.. "Go away," Chang told it. "We're just looking today." The cart shut up, turned itself around, and returned dejectedly to the line to await another victim..Up front, the two voices are louder, more excited. The engine starts. Before either of the owners takes a.Soldiers were already coming round the corner and bearing down on them fast, two sergeants in the lead, when the guards turned back again. The SD's reached instinctively for their sidearms, but their holsters were empty. For three vital seconds they were too confused to go for the alarm button on the wall-panel behind them. Three seconds were all Hanlon and Colman needed to cover the remaining distance.. "I didn't know we were in a rotten-dad contest.." abandoned. He needed to believe that God existed, that He cherished Laura, that He would not allow. "You seem surprised," Rastus said to Bernard.. "Ex-sergeant Malloy of the SDs," Swley said. "He decided he'd had enough and quit over a month ago. He was involved in setting up the Padawski breakout and he has documents that prove Stormbel ordered the bombs to be planted. He wants to go public." Swley shrugged. "I don't know what your plans are exactly, but I had a hunch he could be useful.." Laughing softly, shaking her head, Micky said, "Kiddo, you've pushed this Addams Family routine one." "You've already said it," Eve told him. She studied the expression on his face for a few seconds and then smiled. "You can't see it yet, can you, Paul?"..most definitely didn't need a caffeine jolt. Her hands were shaking. The cup rattled against the saucer. Anita's eyes blazed as her shock began wearing off and dissipated itself as anger. "Why should I? Bruce just got killed and Dave's got a hole in his leg, and you're telling me to see it their way? What kind of a man are you anyhow?" She sneered past Colman's shoulder at Kath, who was returning the communicator to her pocket. "I can see why. It didn't take you long, did it? Is she good?'. Curtis clutches at the hot dogs. Startled, the man lets go of the bundle. Having claimed the meaty..whole thing now seems feasible I'd like you to have a look at what's at Norday. You should take Hoskins with you. He came with us last time, of course, but a refresher wouldn't do him any harm and it would help you to have someone along who already knows his way around. That was really what I wanted to talk to you about." Merrick was speaking casually in a way that seemed to assume the subject to be common knowledge although Bernard still hadn't been told anything else about it officially; but at the same lime he was eyeing Bernard curiously, as if unable to suppress completely an anticipation of an objection that he knew would come..are."

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