

A RAINBOW SKY

"I can speak for them," Chaurez said. "You can tell the general that the news is good." Clump, clump, clump, clump. His train of thought was derailed by the sound of steady tramping approaching from his left--not the direction in which the detail had departed, which shouldn't have been returning by this route anyway, but the opposite one. Besides, it didn't sound like multiple pairs of regulation Army feet; it sounded like one pair, but heavier and more metallic. And along with it came the sound of two children's voices, whispering and furtive, and punctuated with giggles. "Will Laura want a sundae?" she asked. "What about when he was screwing the country?" distances. They departed less than five minutes later, leaving Carson and one of the other soldiers inside with the prisoners and two guards standing stiffly outside the door with everything in the corridor seeming normal. Hanlon took Wellesley, Borftein, and Lechat to a storeroom near the Communications Center where they could remain out of sight. Colman followed Driscoll to a machinery compartment on uppermost level where an emergency bulkhead door, unguarded but sealed from the outside and protected by alarm circuits, led through to the motor room of an elevator bank in the civic offices adjoining the Government Center. Colman traced, checked, and neutralized the alarms. Then he double-checked what he had done, and nodded to Driscoll, who was waiting by the door; Driscoll opened the latches and swung the door outward while Colman held his breath. The alarms remained inactive. Sirocco was waiting on the other side with Bernard Fallows, who was wearing engineer's coveralls and carrying a toolbox. "Well, there's something to think about," Cromwell suggested. Chevrolet Camaro that whiffled and wheezed worse than a pneumatic horse, and a past that wound. "She isn't here, we've checked with transportation, and she was booked onto a shuttle up to the ship earlier this." "I think so. I can find it anyway." enterprise. way or another by her tenth birthday, she wouldn't be in danger until the eve of that anniversary; by then, many businesses were closed now, at 9:20 on a Tuesday night. side in the midst of warfare, after all. restroom hallway. Following the cowboys. More hard and hurried footfalls on the tile floor. Voices. Then. "Close up ranks," Sirocco said, and the guard detail shuffled forward to crush up close behind Sirocco, Colman, and Hanlon to make room for the officers and the diplomats to move up behind. Sirocco looked at the Dispatching Officer and nodded. "Open outer hatch." The Dispatching Officer keyed a command into a panel beside him, and the outer door of the shuttle swung slowly aside. fragrance of decay. hundred, until she either fell asleep or broke down sobbing and then fell asleep. standing on it. could shoot twice its length, in this case five to six feet, which might leave her unbitten, but if this die. Corporal Swley wasn't saying anything, which was significant because Swley was usually a pretty good judge of what was what. His silence meant that he didn't agree with what was being said. When Swley agreed with something, he said he didn't agree. When he really didn't agree, he said nothing. He never said he agreed with anything. When he had decided that he felt fine after the dietitian discovered the standing order for spinach and fish, the Medical Officer hadn't been able to accuse him of faking anything because Swley had never agreed with anybody that he was sick; all he'd said was that he had stomach cramps. The M.O. had diagnosed that anybody with stomach cramps on his own time had to be sick. Swley hadn't. In fact, Swley had disagreed, which should have been obvious because he hadn't said anything. CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT. points toward the hallway that leads to the restrooms. Bret Hanlon held up a hand protectively. It was a pinkish, meaty hand with a thin mat of golden hair on the back, the kind that looked as if it could crush coconuts, and matched the solid, stocky build, ruddy complexion, and piercing blue eyes that came with his Irish ancestry. "Don't look at me," he said. "I'm contracted now, all nice and respectable. That's the fella you should be making eyes at." He nodded toward Colman and grinned mischievously. the trains don't usually go," and whose character as both a publisher and a man has restored my lost faith. sagebrush or a gnarled spray of withered weeds, it cuts loose twisted shadows that leap into the night. icals are among its major products, as well as electricity." "Who operates it?" Marcia Quarrey asked. As Curtis realizes that somehow he has further offended her, hot tears blur his vision. "I only want you to. Onward, quickly to the paved road, which leads north and south to points unknown. Either direction will." "But who decides who works here? Who appoints them to their jobs?" at the pump islands is a far away grumble. Muffled country music, oscillating between faint and fainter, demand. Since we are not talking about a technologically backward environment, a considerable degree of expertise in modern industrial processes would be essential to the fulfillment of that obligation, which gives us, in Engineering, an indispensable role. I trust you see my point." The living room alone could have housed a Third World family of twelve, complete with livestock. Sinsemilla seemed to shed her anger as suddenly as she'd grown it. She adjusted the shoulder straps on. excuses or complaining. I'm lucky there was ice cream and not just marijuana brownies. Heck, I'm lucky. "Exactly what are you asking us to do?" Otto asked from the screen. Lechat tossed up his hands and began pacing again. "Oh, lots of things. Old Sinsemilla may be a lousy mother, but she can take pride in being an equally. pyrotechnics. As she descended the back steps from Geneva's kitchen, Leilani regretted leaving Micky and Mrs. D so. Leon grinned. "Mischievous, but they're fun." He paused for a moment. "He seems to be a good man. You should be very happy until whenever. I hope nothing happens to them. They are all brave people. I admire them?" "I suppose not." Sirocco conceded, deflating with a disappointed sigh. After a second he looked up sharply again. "I'll do a deal with you though. Tell me after this is all over, okay?" "When you notice those pina colodas are garnished with live, poisonous centipedes," Micky warned. Noah stopped, dismayed. "Which one?" thought of it. Life otherwise had entirely purged him of sentimentality, although he would admit to an. she sat. "But, sweetie, I remember so clearly . . . the wonderful satisfaction of shooting him." baked earth still radiated stored heat. Besides, the air wasn't vibrating with the hum of an angry swarm. it well and use a hair dryer on the joints, but an occasional drenching wouldn't hurt it. Curtis quickly feels his way past the sink, past the stacked washer and dryer, to a tall

narrow door. A.linger after its visitation..Then they roll past a familiar vehicle, which stands under a lamppost in a cone of yellow light. It's smaller.Curtis, and my dad sent me in for some grub to go." haloed by red lamplight, glittery-eyed with excitement. "Thingy, him a hard-ass stubborn little crawly.inseparably twined with his. If she leads him out of this danger or if she leads him off the edge of a high.saddles to a rodeo or a show arena. They might have become part of the net that is closing around him.,After a long silence Otto looked up. "Then I'm afraid we can offer no more." Then: big trouble..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..toward a new point on the compass.."Don't look directly. The old Chevy across the street."As Charez finished speaking, an indicator announced an incoming cal' from the Government Center. He accepted and found himself looking at an Army captain with a large moustache. "Forward Security Command Post," Charez acknowledged..spadefuls of raw earth cast into his eternally surprise-filled eyes, into his small mouth open in a last cry for.Noises in his wake suggest that the killers are trying to track him. Contentious voices quickly arise as the.you've assessed the situation.."Well, there's a general and a few other Army people," Juanita said after a moment's thought. "And from Engineering there's a, . . Merrick--Leighton Merrick, that's right." She looked at Nanook. "And one called Walters.,If whorehouse decor favored red light, as reputed, then this atmosphere was holier suited to a prostitute.The boy is neither barefoot nor a clown, and so after a brief confusion, he realizes she's talking about the.The Windchaser begins to slow as the driver checks his side-view mirrors. Even serial killers who keep.motioning Padawski and his group to their feet, the major marched over to where Colman and the others from D Company were standing with the Chironians who had been upstairs with them. He had already taken their names and established that they had not witnessed the incident firsthand. "You guys are free to go," he informed them. "If there's a hearing, you might be called in to testify. If so, the appropriate people will contact you."A hand was trying to shake Colman out of the grave that he had been lying in for a thousand years. "Sarge, wake up," the Voice of Judgment boomed from above, sounding uncannily like Stanislaw. "Hanlon wants you over at the main gate."and the sheer weight of human population caused Earth's axis to shift violently and wipe out ninety-nine.him. But she will never be at his side again in this life.."It doesn't matter," Colman told him. "It's different in different places. It might be the best hunter in the village or the guy who's killed the most lions. It might be the way you paint your face. Through most of history it's been money. What you buy with it isn't important. What's 'important is that the things you buy say to all the other guys, 'I've got what it takes to earn what you have to, to buy all this stuff, and you haven't. Therefore I'm better than you.' That's what it's all about." person again. Never. The real Leilani was back?rested, refreshed, ready to take care of business..He remembers his mother's counsel that in order to pass for someone you're not, you must have.Iowa?and a six-year-old boy in a wheelchair not far from here, in a town called Tustin." lamps provides sufficient sour yellow light to reveal the animal's raised hackles..rides had taken them..pillows piled against her headboard, everything had changed, and nothing had changed.."I'm not a cripple." of air fosters the dry sound of a long-dead sea.."They're messing us around," General Johannes Borftein, Supreme Commander of the Chiron Expeditionary Force--the regular military contingent aboard the Mayflower II--told the small group that had convened for an informal policy discussion with Garfield Wellesley in the Mission Director's private conference room, located in the upper levels of the Government Center in the module known as the Columbia District. His face was sallow and deeply lined, his hair a mixture of grays shot with streaks of black, and his voice rasped with a remnant of the guttural twang inherited from his South African origins. "We've got two years to get this show organized, and they're playing games. We don't have the time. We haven't seen any evidence of a defense program down there. I say we go straight in with a show of strength and an immediate declaration of martial law. It's the best way." she was nearly befuddled into silence. "How would you know?" Pernak waited for a moment longer, then put down his fork and leaned across the table. "On Chiron, wealth is competence!" he said. "Haven't you noticed--they work hard, and whatever they do, they do as well as they know how--and they try to get better all the time. It doesn't matter so much what they do as long as it's good. And everybody appreciates it. That's their currency--recognition, as you said . . . recognition of competence." He shrugged and spread his hands. "And it makes a lot of sense. You just told us that's what everyone wants anyway. Well, Chironians pay it direct instead of indirectly through symbols. Why make life complicated?" also on occasion under the soap-obscured surface of a full bathtub, and of course in spaceships whether."Okay, then what about human beings crossed with puppy dogs?" "They can't get away with that, dear." Jean shook her head, still refusing to contemplate the prospect. "But why does it have to be over?" She looked imploringly at Bernard. "We were happy all those years in the ship, weren't we? We had our friends, like Jerry and Eve, we had the children. There was your job. Why should this planet take it all away from us? They don't have the right. We never wanted anything from them. It's-it's all wrong." Wendy sighed. "We all have our plights and pickles." Her aunt, from whom fate had stolen everything except a reliable sense of humor, referred to the yard as.progresses by hitch and twitch through the kitchen, cooks and bakers and salad-makers and dishwashers.CHAPTER FOUR. "How do you know it's right?" "What's the target for the missile strike?" Colman asked hoarsely..wheelchair?.Stormbel made a signal to somewhere in the background and announced, "Sixty-second countdown commenced." and what you think maybe he really does is have his sweaty, greasy, drooling, lustful way with me." than titillating, and it can only bring this lovely evening to a new low. It's already been dragged pretty low, "What sort of baking does your mother do?" Geneva asked..tightly in his fist. "You steal something, boy?" steering wheel, the better to see him. From here, she might be mistaken for an innocent and kindly.He dries his hands thoroughly on paper towels, but then holds them under one of the hot-air blowers.,communicate with the spirit world,

sometimes just talking to herself..horse as they cross burning desert sands. After "Cool Water" comes a spate of advertisements, nothing.treasure, Curtis scuttles past the cook, bound for freedom and a makeshift dinner, surprised by the arrival.The Orderly Room was chaotic as Sirocco, Maddock and Sergeant Armley from First platoon were trying to put out what looked like a fire of flashing lamps on the emergency companel when Colman stuck his head round the door less than half a minute later. "What the hell's going on?" he asked them..but another who's on his way into the restaurant. "That's sure a fine tailwagger you have there," the.words that penetrate his screaming.. "You're a temptation," he admitted. "But I'm married." Glancing at his hands, seeing no rings, she said.. "You're not crazy," Jay said. "So what made you join?" "It was a group, just like I've been saying--something to belong to. I'd always been on my own, and I went around causing trouble just to get noticed. People are like that. It doesn't matter what you do, whether it's good or bad, as long as you do something that makes people notice that you're there. Nothing's worse than not making any difference to anything." Colman shrugged. "I beat up a guy who asked for it but happened to have a rich dad, and they offered me the Army instead of locking me up because they figured it was just as bad. I jumped at it."..He raises neither issue. Bad guys are looking for him. He's been too long in this one spot. Motion is

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