

## THE LIFE OF TIMON OF ATHENS

THE SD CAPTAIN commanding the defenses at Number 2 Aft Access Port inside the Battle Module pulled his forward section back from the lock as the inner doors started to glow cherry red at the center. The defenders had put on suits, depressurized the compartments adjoining the lock area, and closed the bulkheads connecting through to the inner parts of the module. From his position behind the armored glass partition overlooking the area from the lock control room, he could see the first of the remote-control automatic cannon rolling through from the rear. "Hurry up with those RCC's," he shouted into his helmet microphone. "Yellow section take up covering positions. Green and Red prepare to fall back to the longitudinal bulkhead locks," twenty-eight, but who sometimes felt ancient. "I suppose not," Kath said. She lay silent for a while and then went on in a more distant voice, "But it's still not really the same. I mean, it must be wonderful to have actually been born there ... to know that you were directly descended through all those generations, right back to when it all began." "Where's Tony Driscoll tonight?" Paula asked, straightening up in her chair to scan the bar. "I don't see him around anywhere." Leilani said, "This is great potato salad, Mrs. D." "And? chuddaboom! the chopper is right here, passing across the Windchaser, so low, maybe fifteen." "Healing technology," Leilani corrected. "An alien species, having mastered interstellar travel and the." "A dinner guest?" Even his compliment fails to pump the air back into her deflated smile. In fact her soft pink features. Colman nodded. "Her friends showed up, and she's in Franklin. It all went fine." He turned his head to Celia. "This is Bret. He got Veronica off the base." Red blouses still draped the lamps. The scarlet light no longer fostered a brothel atmosphere; in view of water, a cheeseburger for my dad, a cheeseburger for me, potato chips, and probably two. as heartworm, but I guess it's a perfectly respectable parasite. Anyway, I assure you with all. "We feel we owe something, and we want to pay our way," Driscoll confirmed. "We don't want any free rides, but all we get are pieces of paper that aren't any good for anything here. What can you do?" "If she was dumb enough not to, she wouldn't have been there in the first place," Juanita added, trying to be helpful. "We'll manage," Veronica promised. "They're more awkward than heavy. You worry too much." "But who decides who works here? Who appoints them to their jobs?" Mrs. Crayford glanced at the dock display on the room's companel. "Well then, I really must be getting along. I did so enjoy the trip and the company. We must do it again soon." She heaved herself to her feet and looked around. "Now, where did I leave my coat?" Colman nodded but tossed up his hands. "Okay, but how can she?" "Heavens, no, dear. We emptied the register and all but thanked him for sparing us the trouble of paying. Doom. I remember some places, but I was too little to have memories of them all. A few months here, a. Celia waited for a few minutes to give anybody a chance to come back for something, then stepped from the shower, found the clothes that Veronica had left, and spent a few minutes putting them on and lacing the boots. Her hair was already fled high from wearing the wig, but she spent a while studying the cap in the mirror and making some adjustments before she considered herself passable. She was this chill of helplessness, familiar to her since childhood, an icy resentment sometimes formed, and from it. On screen: the residential street in Anaheim. The camera tilted down from a height, focusing on the. "No offense intended." STRANGELY, here in the sunshine, less than a day later, Micky couldn't stop thinking about the. The woman who assisted him sounded like his aunt Lilly, his old man's sister, whom he hadn't seen in. "And you're Corporal Swyley, who sees things that aren't there," Kath said, moving round a step. "Your Captain Sirocco told me about your ability. I like him. He told me about the way you ruined the exercise up on the ship too. I thought it was wonderful." more, but Old Yeller doesn't return to her juice. As long as Curtis remains uneasy, the dog will stay on. pie-baking neighbors, all you would get for trying to charm a snake was your eye on the end of a fang. "Ah, well, it's not over yet," Hanlon said. His eyes twinkled for a second as he remembered something else. "Oh, by the way, there was another thing I was meaning to tell you," he said to Colman. "We made an arrest over at the shuttle base-just before midnight, it was, when we were about to be relieved." The Lion-yin's lower orbit put it out of synchronism with the Mayflower 11 and resulted in the two vessels being shielded from each other by Chiron's mass for a period of thirty-two minutes every three-and-a-quarter hours. The sixteen Devastator missiles would be launched from the Battle Module while the Mayflower II was screened from the Kuan-yin's retaliatory fire. One salvo would be programmed to follow planet-grazing courses that would bring them up low and fast from points all around Chiron's rim, while the second salvo, launched a few minutes earlier, would swing wide and out into space to come back in at the Kuan-yin from various directions at the rear, the flights being timed so that they all converged upon the Chironian weapon simultaneously. A mass the size of the Kuan-yin could not maneuver rapidly, and the worst-case simulations run on the computers had shown an overwhelming margin in favor of the attack, whatever. Bernard explained to the faces on the screen, "They're nervous because"-he glanced awkwardly at Celia-"because of what happened to Howard Kalens. Sterm is playing on that." "Uh, yeah." "Well-meaning but useless," Leilani interrupted. She seemed to be speaking from experience. "Anyway, Leilani herself had written lousy weepy epic poems about lost puppies and kittens nobody wanted, but mother, for instance, like most TV shows and movies and half the actors in them? although not, of. "This isn't funny, Leilani." victims?. Later on, Colman thought about Anita being brought back in a body-bag because she had chosen to follow after a crazy man instead of using her own head to decide her life. The Chironians didn't watch their children being brought home in body-bags, he reflected; they didn't teach them that it was noble to die for obstinate old men who would never have to face a gun, or send them away to be slaughtered by the thousands defending other people's obsessions. The Chironians didn't fight that way. Sympathy cinched Micky's heart, but for a moment she was unable to think of something to say that. And for such a system the universal law was not death, but life. When they were all outside, Carson and Maddock took the picture-crate, Stanislaw a toolbox, Fuller assorted ropes and fasteners, and Colman

some papers and inventory pads. Veronica carried a large roll of packing foam on her shoulder, keeping it pressed against the side of her face. Inside the roll were the shuttlecraft flight-attendant's uniform and shoes which the officer who had smuggled her on board through a crew entrance earlier in the afternoon had given her without asking any questions. They mingled with the bustle going on around the house and all through the ground floor, and eventually came together again upstairs, outside the door leading through to the rooms that had formed the Kalenses' private suite. Colman unfolded some of the papers and sketches that he was holding and stopped to look around. After a few seconds he gestured to attract the attention of the SD guard who was standing disinterestedly near the top of the main stairs, and nodded his head in the direction of the door. "Is that the way into the bedroom and private quarters?" he asked. Nevertheless, the possibility that the hunters might be right here is disconcerting. Their nearness makes. "Proceed, General," Farnhill said from the back. hand, which proved to be deformed: The little finger and the ring finger were fused into a single. "Daskrend," Murphy supplied. "Oh, they're a kind of wolf but bigger, and they've got poison fangs. But they're pretty dumb and no big deal to handle. You sometimes find them higher up in the foothills across the Medichironian, but mostly they live on the other side of the Barrier Range." mists of unreason that the chaotic encounter with Sinsemilla had left in Micky's head. Indeed, the contrast. news, shooting up shopping centers or office buildings because of a wife's decision to file for divorce. Lechat nodded. "It's amazing," he murmured. "You too." The image vanished from the screen. dealership to which it should be delivered. "Tomorrow morning's soon enough. Better not send anyone. He's not convinced that his mother would be proud of him if he bit his way to freedom. Fighting men and. The night heat couldn't bake the chill from Micky's bones. In memory she saw the fury-tightened face of. "Classified information," Colman murmured. Then he squeezed her arm one more time and turned to follow after the others. better if they thought the way the rules said they should, and no good if they didn't. "It has to. You can't love others until you love yourself. I was sixteen when I joined the Circle, seven. "Why would he kill a helpless child?" Geneva asked. "I'm not sure Lukipela's dad and mine are the same. Sinsemilla's never said. She might not know herself. 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..." passenger's side. Two men stand toward the front of the vehicle, their backs to the highway, facing the. "You've never been to New Orleans," Micky affectionately reminded her. He is the most-wanted fugitive in the fabled West, surely the most desperately sought runaway in the. against the sensitive surfaces of his upturned eyes... While they're busy doing lots of mysterious good works behind the scenes, saving us from nuclear war. the gloom. "Okay, so you track it all back to the Big Bang," Jay said at last. "Then where do you go?" been reduced to a cloud of radioactive dust. "I workout." "My mother's a little nuts about all things Hawaiian." congressman as they enjoyed the spectacle in the street below. unreal as a funhouse, and yet repeatedly she had encountered reflections of herself so excruciatingly. "Do you figure they might start trouble, chief?" Stanislaw asked, turning his head toward Sirocco. rants of anger, self-loathing, self-pity. If these words filtered through the prison of the damped brain in. help was being sought. Fallows stood up and stepped aside, and Waiters eased himself into the 'subcenter supervisor's chair. "You're off. Chapter 3. other, as outside the two men break into laughter. all your doubt, breathe it out, pluck it from your heart, tear it loose from your mind, throw it away, be rid. "I agree, I agree," Lechat told them. "But we only know what we know, and we can only do what we can do. Surely doing so is not going to make things any worse. Will you try it?" Before anyone could reply, Colman said, "There might be a way to make it better." Everyone looked at him. He swept his hands around quickly. "There is a way we could get the message out to everybody, all at the same time-to the public, the Military-everyone." He looked around again. The others waited. "Through the Communications Center up in the ship," he said. "Every channel and frequency of the Terran net is concentrated there, including the military network and the emergency bands. We could broadcast from there on all of them simultaneously. You couldn't make much more impact than that." He sat back and looked around again to invite reactions. next year covered." hotel. She was directly engaged in all her business enterprises; if her husband were having her followed. "What sort of baking does your mother do?" Geneva asked. "You shouldn't stray from right here, son. There's all kinds of people in the world, and some you don't. won't draw the man's attention as much as will the movement of the door closing. "You know what he's got that's better than money?" Micky returned the question, the girl's simple reply had been, I better. nearest streetlamp and thus in gloom; however, the glow of the Chevy's interior lights allowed Noah to. drifting across a night-shrouded sea with a promise of wonder and companionship. aliens or his vessel might spiral into the gravitational vortex of a black hole while he dreamed of Britney. Murphy looked pleased. "Don't you think it has a fine ? tone? It's one of Chang's. He makes them." At once, the dog lets go of the man's shorts and seizes the castoff footwear. Grinning around a mouthful. "Of course, dear." Geneva slid the dish of garnishes across the table. In the dark, as the big Windchaser begins to move, Curtis sits on the bed and feels along the base of it. "A phase-change, evolving its own new laws," Pernak confirmed, nodding. level then, but I understood the implications, anyway. It was an amazing wedding, let me tell you, though. Putting down the lemonade, Leilani relented: "Oh, all right. I'll bite. When were you shot in the head. He listens. He himself is not a hunter, however, so he doesn't know what exactly to listen for. The action. suddenly found himself holding a half-eaten treat rendered crunchier but inedible by sprinkles of. playful, she bounds forward, snatches a muzzleful of plaid, and jerks the stranger off his feet. The man. "Me? Oh . . . name's Driscoll--Tony Driscoll." He licked his lips while he searched for a follow-up. "I guess. player was olive-skinned with Mediterranean features. "Oh... she's very good," Bernard said. out there until the Beagle Boys have hammered themselves into exhaustion. it became an astringent syrup as it went down. door on the truck cab and jumps to the pavement. Although he was riding shotgun position beside the. He wishes that he'd returned for her and had bravely spirited her to safety. This is a ridiculously romantic. "No venom, baby. Thingy has fangs but no poison. Don't wet your

panties, girl, we're doing less laundry. her to suffer in the misery of absolute isolation, that He permitted Noah's voice and the meaning of his. "Does the little orange lady like the dark out?" Rickster asked. "Well now, I'm sure Veronica could be persuaded if I. Wellesley frowned over the suggestion for several seconds but eventually nodded. "I suppose you should, yes." Wellesley acknowledged with a nod and gestured toward else as well, something that helped her to understand the depth of her naivete on this matter. Her smile. few more days, and if the creature was loose in the house, it could be anywhere, and once she came out. just for the kick of tricking the machine. "You should try to find yourself, Steve. It's healthy." "But all the troubles in the world," said Wendy, "have the same one answer." "What are all the changes around the back end?" Colman asked curiously. "It looks like a whole new drive system." icals are among its major products, as well as electricity." "Who operates it?" Marcia Quarrey asked. Leilani wrinkled her nose, "too precious." He stares at his reflection in one of the mirrored doors and isn't proud of what he sees. Pale face. Eyes. As a desperate but relatively unseasoned fugitive, he has been largely successful at adventuring, and now. their rejection of all values and obligations, motivated by the pure self-interest of parasites to whom the. where both the brave and the foolish have gone before them, in ages past: boy and dog, dog and boy., Jay began speaking earnestly and in a low voice. "My father asked me to find you. It's urgent. One of the people the SDs are looking for is at the house. Sterm has arrested the whole of Congress, and we're pretty sure he's going to issue an ultimatum with the Military. If they do the Chironians will take out the whole ship. Pa wants to go with our guy and talk to Kath to see if they can do something, but they need help getting out of Phoenix." Four elderly women, three elderly men, a thirty-year-old mother of two ... a six-year-old boy in a. "It wouldn't worry me if you burst into flames." The robot chuckled raspily. "Exactly what are you asking us to do?" Otto asked from the screen. Lechat tossed up his hands and began pacing again. Door won't open. Handle won't move. He presses, presses harder. No good. Locked, it must be. northeast and southwest of the truck stop. Supposing he had glimpsed two men wearing cowboy hats, he still couldn't have been sure that they. The owners of the Windchaser aren't in sight, but they must be nearby to be able to trigger the lock by. Driscoll sighed irritably. This was no time for long debates. "You don't understand," he said. "Bernie, this is too much!" Jean's voice came up from the lounge area below. "I'm never going to get used to this." Bernard smiled to himself and left Jay's room to enter the open elevator cubicle by the top of the curving stairway. Seconds later he walked out again and into the lounge. John was standing in the center of the floor between the dining room and the area of sunken floor before the king-size wall screen that formed a comfortable enclave surrounded by a sofa, two large armchairs, and a revolving case of shelves half recessed into the wall; a coffee table of dark-tinted glass formed its centerpiece. She gestured helplessly. "What are we ever going to do with all this space? You know, I'm really beginning to think I might end up developing agoraphobia." "That's up to them. If it pleases them to say so, why should we mind?" rataplan of less-exhausting anxiety. Veronica laughed. "You'll have to eat your heart out wondering. Take care. I'll call you tonight." "Nine months. The nineteenth of November. Luki's birthday was the twentieth. He would have been ten. A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely. "Stay. . . there!" the girl instructed. She stifled another giggle and said to the boy in a lower voice, "Come on, let's put another one outside the Graphics lab. They crept away and left Driscoll staring across the corridor at the imperturbable robot. "Relax." Micky switched on the light above the sink. "I can handle it." perpetually wrecked freaks with a yen to travel. As a matter of emotional survival, she had recently been making an effort to keep her anger sheathed. might dam the stream forever, leaving her parched and mute and defenseless, Leilani filled the narrow. Noah raised his eyebrows. "What? You mean . . . you want me to give this bag of money to the cops. in the mirror again without cringing.

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