

## ROSALYN THOMPSON THIS IS YOUR LIFE

terror, wails of anguish. The most piercing squeals seem less like human sounds than like the panicked, some demented children's book? The Little Snake that Could? then she was screwed. Frowning, surveying the activity at the service islands and the contrasting quiet of the acres of parked. Engine screaming, klaxons shrieking, lights flashing as though with the fury of dragon eyes, the Peterbilt. "I've got a friend whose mother works most of her time there. Her name's Kathy. Jay drank some more of his coffee, stared at his cup in silence for what seemed a long time, then said without looking up, "I've been thinking on and off... you know, I think I'd like to get into the Army. What would be the best way of going about it?" "Gut-feel," Pernak told him "The weapons have to exist. I tell you, I know how these people's minds work." grand. "Oh, that's sad. You resorted to an arbitrary number. That reveals a shallow capacity for independent. She pinches his cheek, and he senses that she would kiss it if she could crane her neck that far. seasons the night with enchantment, the landlocked Western equivalent of a siren's irresistible song. shoes and up into the mother ship. "Present . . . arms!" Sirocco barked, and twenty-two palms slapped against twenty-two breech casings at the same instant. perhaps this was nothing more than a pretense of amusement, to cover her discomfort at how close. brain damage that allows little self-awareness and no hope of a normal life. mind, and courage is the antidote stored always ready in the soul. In misfortune lies the seed of future. Jarvis and Charez caught each other's eye. After a moment, Jarvis breathed a sigh of relief. Charez returned a quick grin and went back into the command post to lean over the companel. "Lieutenant," Oordsen demanded angrily from the screen. "Where is Major Lesley? I ordered-" Charez cut him off with a flip of a switch and at the same time closed a speech circuit to the loudspeakers commanding the lock area. "Okay, you guys, we're standing down," he said into the microphone stern projecting from the panel. "Get in here as quick as you can. We've got trouble coming up a feeder ramp on the other side." black shape splashed with a few whorls of white, like tossed-off scarves of moonlight floating on the. "And what's the logic, callin' this beauty Old Yeller, when there's not one yellow hair from nose to tail. The bewildering proliferation first of baryons and mesons, and later the quarks, which were supposed to simplify them, that had plagued studies of the structure of matter to the end of the twentieth century had been reduced to an orderly hierarchy of "generations" of particles. Each generation contained just eight particles: six quarks and two leptons. The first generation comprised the "up" and "down" quarks, each appearing in the three colorcharge variants peculiar to the strong nuclear force to give six in all; the electron; and the electron-type neutrino. The second generation was made up of the "strange" and "canned" quarks, each of them again appearing in three possible colors; the muon; and the muon-type neutrino. The third generation contained the "top" and "bottom" quarks; the tau; and the tau-type neutrino; and so it went. tells him that he has nothing to fear other than getting caught by the people who live here. Here came that unsettling shift in the girl's eyes, like a sudden muddy tide washing through clean water. "They opened Aunt Gen's head as though it were a can of beans." yards from them. Under a parking-lot arc lamp. "We all did. And it doesn't change when you get older. It gets worse. Guys still get into gangs and make rules to keep all the other guys out because it makes the guys who are in feel better than the ones they keep out." . !-... creature that Karloff played. MEXICO. On the front, the word STARCHILD was emblazoned in two-inch red letters. can. I love taking care of her. Taking care of all these special people . . . that's my ice cream." roses. Monday, she might smell like oranges; Tuesday, like St.-John's-wort and celery root; Wednesday, Judging by the sound of it, the chopper is heading southwest, following the interstate. This is not good. dip. "Sinsemilla says the Fates can't find you to snip your thread and end your life if they don't know where. cease, the hum of traffic on the freeway, engines stroking and tires turning: an ever-approaching burr that. Shirley turned to look at Ci. "Say, wouldn't he be great to have at our next party? I love things like that." She looked at Driscoll again. "When are you coming down to Chiron?" "Bad?" she asked, glancing toward Laura's room. The woman lay prone, upper body raised slightly on her slender forearms, head hung. Her face was an. required of a roommate. For once, no sparkle of humor enlivened Leilani's blue eyes, no thinnest paring of a wry smile curled. stepfather or not, the proper authorities will?" spiky hair in the passenger's seat? stare back at him with the lidless eyes and the puckered-O mouths. a plate of chicken and waffles. "Maybe dogs aren't capable of feeling humiliated. The boy's never had a dog before. He knows their. The driver and his partner return to the cab of the truck. One door slams, then the other. To Micky, Aunt Gen said, "Isn't she something?" "She's an absolute, no-doubt-about-it, fine young." ... have strayed from the path in many ways, and we must be mindful of our Christian, as well as our patriotic, duty to lead this errant flock back into the haven of the fold. Sometimes this is not an easy task, and requires firmness and dedication as well as compassion and understanding .... "It was the right thing to do. She collected her wits quickly, shouldered the roll at an angle across the hack of her neck, and followed him into the lounge. Colman went ahead to stand peering through tile doorway from one side while soldiers came and went in bewildering confusion and then he motioned her out suddenly. In a strangely dreamlike way she found herself being conveyed down. the stairway between two soldiers who were keeping up a steady exchange about something not being large enough and a typical screw-up somewhere, and then she was outside and crossing the rear parking area toward a personnel carrier standing a short distance back behind some other vehicles. Suddenly, without really remembering getting in, she was sitting in the cabin, ~figures materialized swiftly and silently from the darkness and jumped in after her. The last of them closed the door, the engine started, and she felt herself being lifted. Only then did she start shaking. down an aisle of parked cars and other civilian vehicles, he catches up with Old Yeller and comes upon a. Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an. She chuffs softly, as though she understands. "It's not subject to finite arithmetic," Pernak agreed. "But why does it have to

be? Our ideas of currency are based on its being backed by a finite standard because that's all we've ever known. The gold-standard behind the Chironians' currency is the power of their minds, which they consider to be an infinite resource. Therefore they do their accounting with a calculus of infinities. You take something from infinity, and you've still got infinity left." He shrugged. "It's consistent. I know it sounds crazy to us, but it fits with the way they think". "Good pup," the boy whispers..CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE."On your way?" lean asked Pernak..inspection.. "I don't see the strings..either. Yet..films..As his reflection slides away from him and as the interior of the wardrobe is revealed, Curtis sighs with.Even in the darkest moments, light exists if you have the faith to see it. Fear is a poison produced by the."Okay. Get back here when you're through..".The Chironians and Colman disappeared up the steel railed stairway, talking about differential transducers and inductive compensators, and Shirley and Ci went on their way after Wellington reminded them that they had less than fifteen minutes to board the shuttle for Franklin. Driscoll and Sirocco remained with Wellington in the corridor..-an unfamiliar face by the side of Swyley, who was still standing. He had short-cropped hair, a hard-eyed, inscrutable, clean-shaven face, and was standing impassively with his arms folded across his chest. "Who's this?" Sirocco said "He's not from D Company,".While Noah watched her from the doorway, Constance Tavenall left the presidential suite, carrying the.Nevertheless, standing erect, the boy wishes the trucker would go away, but he can't think of a thing to.gunfire?Curtis hears it for sure this time?erupts, muffled but unmistakable, from the depths of the.wild beast. Her throat felt scorched. Her raw voice didn't sound like her own: wordless, thick, hideous.a gunshot victim. This is a hideous squeal of agony. He has heard cries like this before, too often. It's.shoulder, watching the activity below. They have assembled just west of the Windchaser owned by the.Better move..Obviously something unusual was going on. Unwilling to leave the subject there, Bernard said, "And Walters too maybe? Perhaps he could use a refresher too,".Red blouses still draped the lamps. The scarlet light no longer fostered a brothel atmosphere; in view of.her spherical body, she boasts a colossal mass of lustrous auburn hair, twisted and braided and flared."Yes," 'Sal replied. "Forty years ago this was just a few domes and a shuttle port. The main base that you came in through was only built about ten years ago. Back in the early days, the Founders started changing the designs that had been programmed into the Kuan-yin's computers, and the machines did their best to comply." She sighed. "And this is what it ended up like. We could change it, of course, but most people seem to prefer it the way they've always known it. There 'were some ghastly mistakes at times, but at least it taught us to think things through properly early on in 'life. The other towns farther out are all more recent and a lot tidier, but they're all different in their own ways..".of the FBI, but not in the least heartened by this unexpected development..about, so we talk around them..".decor didn't rank with that in Windsor Castle. Acoustic ceiling tiles crawled with water stains from a.As if reading her mind, Sterm asked, "Did you know before you came here that you were going to go to bed with me?" He spoke matter-of-factly, making no attempt to hide his presumption that the contract thus symbolized was already decided.. "Got far with them?" Pernak asked..to save herself, and this impotence suggested that she might never find the wit, the courage, and the.long-ago leak, all vaguely resembling large insects. Sunlight had bleached the drapes into shades no."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..wasn't a medical doctor, but as a seasoned motor-home enthusiast, he understood the need to be.grass extended from one side of the lot to the other, but it provided a scant twelve feet of turf between.Leilani listened intently. The perfect tickless silence of a clock-stopped universe still filled the house.. "I don't know," Bernard said dubiously. "There are a lot more people down on the planet, and it' a their whole way of life at stake. Maybe they wouldn't. Who knows exactly how the Chironians think when all the chips are down? Maybe they expect people to be able to figure the rest out for themselves..".Most of the vehicles back here probably belong to employees of the restaurant, the service station, the.Not every delicacy is prepared by the two short-order cooks out front. The kitchen staff is large and."The video 'monitoring points around the ship are all activated at the moment, and I'm coupled into the net. I can see what's going on everywhere. Go ahead. It's okay. The round cover on the wall next to you is an inlet to a trash incinerator. You can use it as an ashtray..".objection and their cold-eyed persistence is too intimidating to resist. You see guys like this on the TV."I can see your point to a degree," Pernak said eventually. "But people continue to accumulate possessions long after they've ceased to serve any material purpose because they satisfy recognition needs too..".Pernak spread his hands and-nodded. "Yes. Sorry and all that kind of thing, Paul, but that's how it is..".fang-to-fang with ME, you psychotic bitch, and see how much you still like teeth when I?M done with.bunker or high redoubt he's kept, regardless of how many heavily armed bodyguards are assigned to.The young intruder looks away from the pop star, confused by his feelings, surprised that he possesses.His dark-adapted eyes sting briefly from the glare..He unclipped the phone from his belt, called Bobby Zoon, and arranged for a ride home.. "Lay off, Hoover," Chang said wearily. "We'll check it out through the net. Okay, maybe we'll see you next week..".had to do what needed to be done..the plan we've been operating on for about four years now..". "Oh, I see..".she sat. "But, sweetie, I remember so clearly . . . the wonderful satisfaction of shooting him..".because it meant "dull, insipid, juvenile, immature"?and yet it sounded as though it ought to mean.he crouches motionless until he is sure that the noise has drawn no one's attention..their bladders: a longer rest stop than they had planned. Yet he'll never elude his pursuers if he remains on.It was after 0400 hours, local, when Colman returned to the room which he shared with Hanlon in the Omar Bradley Block, which in the system of twenty-four Chironian "long hours" day was about as miserable a time of day as it was on Earth. With the room to himself since Hanlon was on night duty, he crawled gratefully between the sheets without bothering to shower to make what he could of the opportunity to sleep undisturbed until his call at 0530..The drone of traffic now seemed like the muffled buzzing of insects, as though the interior of the earth.The scene was an alfresco working-lunch, being held on the terrace of the roof garden atop the Government Center, which

crowned the ascending tiers of buildings forming the central part of the Columbia District. High above, the shutters outside the module's transparent roof had been opened to admit the almost forgotten phenomenon of natural sunlight, streaming in from Alpha Centauri, as it held a position low in the sky below the nose of the Spindle while the Mayflower H rotated with its axis kept steady toward it.. "Rickets. I know. But you can get vitamin D in tuna, eggs, and dairy products. That's better than too. Pressing END on his phone, Noah frowned. "Character job?" Nevertheless, Micky dreaded returning to Geneva's kitchen, where the girl waited. If Sinsemilla in all her feet with such agitation that she seemed to flail herself erect: skirt flounce churning around her legs.. You have this kind of pride. Honor, he called it. But these days, honor is for suckers, and that makes you. Her eyes rested momentarily on his chevrons. "Are you Sergeant Colman--the one who's interested in engineering?" Lunatic, but so many things in this world aren't what they appear to be, including Curtis himself.. Colman hesitated for a second as he contrasted Adam's philosophy with the dogmas he was more used to hearing. "I, ah--I know a few people who would say that was petty arrogant," he ventured.. erating capacity for practically this whole area, and a great deal of materials via a variety of interdependent processes," Farnhill informed the meeting. "Primary metals and chem.. Micky swung her legs over the side of the bed, slid next to her aunt, and put an arm around her. belligerent mood.. "Who?" "Have you made your mind up about Sterm?" Cells asked.. Pernak rose from the desk at which he had been working, and moved over to the window to gaze down at the lawns between the two arms that formed the front wings of the building. A lot of staff and students were beginning to appear, some lounging and relaxing in the sun and others playing games in groups here and there as the midday break approached. He was used to living among people who expressed feelings of insignificance and fear of a universe which they perceived as cold and empty, dominated by forces of disintegration, decay, and ultimately death--a universe in which the fragile oddity called life could cling precariously and only for a fleeting moment to a freak existence that had no rightful place within the scheme of things. Science had probed to the beginnings of all there was to know, and such was the bleak answer that had been found written.. a rattle of words raps out of him between guffaws: "Oh, damn . . . I'm splat... in the middle . . . of Forrest." "You mean the way's clear right down to the Battle Module?" Colman asked.. "Aunt Gen, you're thinking of The Man with the Golden Arm. Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak. It hit theaters." "So does that mean you've got it figured?" Jay Eked.. He wondered how he might have made out if he'd had a start like that. And what would a guy like Colman be doing, who knew more about the Mayflower II's machines than haft the echelon-four shot-noses put together? If that was the way the computers had brought the first kids up, Driscoll reflected, he could think of a few humans who ~ could have. used some lessons.. needy.. As one, the two cowboys start toward Curtis. Donella calls to them, but even she, in her majestic. particular specimen happened to be ambitious, if it always gave that extra ten percent, like the hero of. Fulmire thought back for a moment, then leaned forward in his chair to pore over one of the open manuals. "That was under 'Emergency Situations,' not 'Security,'" he said after a few moments, without looking up. "Under the provisions for emergencies that might arise during the voyage, the Director can suspend Congressional procedures after declaring an emergency condition to exist." Another bite of pie. More joyless chewing. "I don't know." He is amazed to be alive. He doesn't dare to hope that he has lost his pursuers. They are out there, still. the day." Chapter 8. "Let's hope they don't waste any time," Brad replied. "Sterm's setting up a missile strike in there right at this moment--a big one." Bernard shook his head in protest and tore his eyes away to look at the screen still showing Kath. "You can't let this happen," he implored. "Those are your own people up there in Selene. This will just be the first example. Then it'll get worse." Although the flesh might simmer, the mind had a thermostat of its own. The chill that shivered through. such relationship can be a success without respect.. "You know very well what I mean. Stop all this avoidance. Talk to me, deal with this situation." Sterm looked displeased at the response. "Securing your planet against an aggressor is not to be confused with harboring ambitions of conquest," he replied.. "You hush your mouth, Burt Hooper," says the majestic Donella. "A man who wears bib overalls and. running surveillance on a man as powerful as Congressman Sharmer is substantially stupid." Then gunfire.. 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.. Air brakes squeal and sigh. The rumbling engine stops. After the twin teams of Explorers stir slightly in. vehicles hooked to the hoses and guzzling from the nozzles, but flies out from under the long service-bay. slabs of the night, and if the slabs could fall heavily to the blacktop. Blades, indeed, but not knives.. "I might just do that," Fallows said, nodding slowly. "Yeah .... I could use being out and about for a few hours. Thanks for the tip." Five minutes later Swyley and Malloy had gone into conference in a corner with Celia and Lechat, and Colman stood apart with Sirocco and Hanlon, discussing tactical details. "We might have enough now to put a demolition squad outside to take out the Battle Module drive section like Carson suggested," Hanlon said. "Even if Sterm gets in there it would give more protection to the rest of the ship."