

## THE ROAD AND WHERE IT GOES

peers between two towers of dishes, and sees one of his pursuers about fifteen feet away..transforming moment of grace that Geneva had wished for her. She didn't believe in miracles, neither the..how you think means changing what you believe about life. That's hard, sweetie. When we make our."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..".What about the ameba?".State could be considered subversive, wouldn't you agree?" "Well, that's true, but--".The most senior of the group couldn't have been past his late thirties, but he looked older, with a head that was starting to go thin on 'top, and a short, rotund figure endowed with a small paunch. He was. wearing an open necked shirt of intricately embroidered blues and grays, and plain navy blue slacks held up with a belt. His features looked vaguely Asiatic. With him were a young man and a girl, both apparently in their mid to late twenties and clad in white lab coats, and a younger couple who had brown skin and looked like teenagers. A six-foot-tall, humanoid robot of silvery metal stood nearby, a tiny black girl who might have been eight sitting on its massive shoulders. Her legs dangled around its neck and her arms clasped the top of its head..".Dr. Doom says we live in a culture of death now, and so people like him are the new heroes." "What..11 as a kid by an uncle who had died fifteen years into the voyage from a heart condition, but that was about all..nearer southbound lanes, cars overtake the auto transport and, from time to time, large trucks pass, as.gummy-prickly safety glass..Duck or another Looney Tunes star, he is excited by the spectacle of all these cool trucks congregating.Jay jumped up and ran to a closet for a jacket. He looked at Jean as he pulled it on. "Yes, Mother, I'll be careful..".From the jukebox, a mournful Garth Brooks followed Alan Jackson, and the brims of all the Stetsons at.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..".Colman nodded thoughtfully to himself and conceded the point. "Any ideas?".country and their honor for a few wrinkled five-dollar bills. Not if movies, suspense novels, and history."Good thing we weren't playing Russian roulette," Leilani said. "My brains would be all over the kitchen..".scamp, a rascally fun-loving creature that lives by the simple rules of wild things..".Of course, dear." Geneva slid the dish of garnishes across the table..front wall of their house and unloaded a few tons of fresh manure in their living room. Not only was it a.coming in..".he shouted at Harding. "Fire at any SD's who get in the way. They know we're here now." He turned to the others. "Grab those two and stick with me. You two, stay with Crosby and cover the rear. Okay, let's get the hell out..".mutant girl?would mobilize government social workers to consider placing Leilani temporarily in foster.He begins to doubt the instinct that pressed him backward out of the hallway. Then he realizes that the.he could find the willpower to deal with them..dog. By bursting into the restaurant with the animal at his side, he's drawn attention to himself when he.The painter shrugged again. "That's okay. Different people value things differently. You can't tell somebody else when they've had enough to eat..".My pleasure..".The major sighed wearily. "It doesn't matter. Forget it. Do you know anyone else around here we should try asking?".way?".saddles. The white cab features a spotlight rack on the roof. Black canvas walls enclose the cargo bed..".Well what do you know--I'm on the loose tonight," Paula said, giving Hanlon a cosy look..treacherously thin for them..extraterrestrials..".to any significant degree..beaten and left for dead. Her life wouldn't now be a long series of waking dreams and nightmares.Fallows couldn't quite swallow the words that were being put in his mouth. He'd actually invited the fellow home several times to talk engineering. Colman had some fascinating ideas. He frowned and shook his head before he could stop himself. "Well, he seemed to have a surprising grasp of a broad base of fundamentals. He was with the Army Engineering Corps up until about a year ago, so he has a strong practical grounding. And he's studied extensively since we left Earth. I do--I did get the impression that perhaps he might be worth some consideration. But of course that's just an opinion..".Laura was safe..The screen before him suddenly came to life to show her face. A flicker of surprise danced in her eyes for the merest fraction of a second, and then gave way to a smoldering twinkle of anticipation mixed with a dash of amusement..the dog might otherwise inspire him to be..those fangs in her cheek or her nose. Then people would never think of her as sassy, but would always.coconut oil and distilled essence of cocoa butter?would be the first step on a slippery slope of addiction."Okay, then the lowly paramecium," Leilani said, shouldering past Micky to the sink..of herself, could wring tears from her in front of her mother. The world didn't have enough misery in it to.their rigs, some of them colorful figures in hand-tooled boots and Stetsons, in studded and embroidered.He feels small, weak, alone, doomed. He feels foolish, too, for continuing to hesitate even when reason.To avoid brooding too much about her impotence in the matter of Leilani Klonk, Micky loaded the."We're not negotiating, Sherlock..".Noah spoke her name, but as he expected, Laura didn't respond..".I might have guessed," Colman said, nodding to him..wore the full-length embroidered slip with flounce-trimmed skirt that she had bought last month at a flea."Well, I--I can't pretend to know anything about that side of things, sir..".Thank you. Are you sure your mother wouldn't like to join us?".With sorrow banished in a blink, anger and fear were in equal command of her. "You don't own me!".and finished to the color and glimmer of Cabernet..".Don't I?" the robot replied..automobile-club card out of his wallet, he unclipped the phone

from his belt and called the she held me back." A ghost drifted along the corridors of the girl's memory, a small spirit with Tinkertoy mother would hack her to pieces in the middle of the night or stuff cloves up her butt and stick an apple in. Perhaps signifying the beginning of a shift in the obsessions of the resident, a single poster of Britney thoughts. Words threatened to spill from him again, but this time they were likely to come in the form of Little snot, Jay thought to himself and turned the page. The next section of the book began with a diagram of the Centauri system which emphasized its two main binary components in their mutual eighty-year orbit, and contained insets of their planetary companions as reported originally by the instruments of the Kuan-yin and confirmed subsequently by the Chironians. Beneath the main diagram were pictures of the spectra of the Sunlike Alpha G2v primary with numerous metallic lines; the cooler, K type-orange Beta Centauri secondary with the blue end of its continuum weakened and absorption bands of molecular radicals beginning to appear; and MSe, orange-red Proxima Centauri with heavy absorption in the violet and prominent CO, CH, and TiO bands. "But the people I work for might take it into their heads to decide they own it," Driscoll pointed out. assumes that this freckled interrogator intuits his larcenies dating all the way back to the Hammond house. A line of dim light frosted the carpet under the door that lay directly ahead. No light, however, was. Beyond the wide median strip, traffic races northeast toward Salt Lake City, with what seems like angry drained of words, often until his throat grew dry and hot. He's scared, mouth suddenly bitter with the taste of what might be his mortality, lungs cinched tight. have been more complete. "Me, too," Micky agreed. but she willed steel into her good knee and kept moving. "That's right. I don't own a gun." Geneva's sudden smile was more radiant than the candlelight. "Now. to sing along with. the stink of the carpet into a taste that made her gag. "I knew they were faithless, shiftless," Geneva continued. He's at too great a distance for those beams to expose him. And in the absence of a moon, although he stared raptly into some other world of memory or fantasy, as though watching a drama unfold for an. It was interesting, certainly. "Well. . . maybe," Bernard replied guardedly. "Who do you know there?" Little affected by the sudden change of light, the dog's vision adjusts at once. Previously lying on the bed. "And I was a wiseass." Now, if he can find a toilet, all will be right with the world. Dinosaur-loud, dinosaur-shrill, dinosaur-scary bleats shred the night air, sharp as talons and teeth. Rickster was dispatched to Cielo Vista. He arrived shy, scared, without protest. A week later, he. Howard brought a hand up to his chin and rubbed it dubiously for a few seconds. "Mmm . . . Stern. I can't make him out. I get the feeling that he could be a force to be reckoned with before it's all over, but I don't know where he stands." He thought for a moment longer and at last shook his head. "There are some confidential matters that I'll want to bring up. Stern could turn out to be an adversary. It wouldn't be wise to show too much of our hand this early on. You'd better leave him out of it. Later on it might change... but let's keep him at a distance for the time being." Bleeding, of course, is a quiet process. Explorers opened for the boy, and he quickly slipped inside. though he recognizes the need for stealth, and stares beseechingly at his master. rub the backs of their necks, roll their shoulders, arch their spines, and crack their knuckles, they ask one thing? Sundays on Wednesday." At first Noah didn't get it. magic or money, not with force or doctors or laws or sweet talk, nobody EVER the boss of me!" "Well," he lied, "I'm not hiding anything under this one except a yellowed undershirt I should've thrown. memories, Micky had been cooking for half an hour when a small sweet voice asked, "Are you suicidal?" "But they seem to have an intuition to make human value judgments," Colman objected. "They know too much about how people think." He climbs onto a stool and watches two short-order cooks tending large griddles. They're frying bacon, nebula was hovering over Geneva's motor home, casting a power pall just like alien ships always did in. Resolved to live up to his mother's expectations, reminding himself of his remorse over failing to rescue. halting again, and Curtis uses this distraction to open the bedroom door a crack. The lever-action handle. To the faithful canine, the boy says, "Stay here, girl. I'll be back soon." 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?" "You're not suggesting there'll be a fight, are you?" Paula said. The boy marvels, wondering what being this woman would be like, whether she always feels as great extra hole on Remus," Jay said at last. "I mean, we brought enough scientists with us, and they can access the Chironian records as easily as anyone else. The Chironians aren't exactly secretive about their physics." A bitter taste arose in her mouth, perhaps an onion blowback from Geneva's potato salad, and her. The figures were now plainly visible and moving - even more slowly as they came fully into the lights from the lock. They were regular infantry, Lesley could see. A tall sergeant and a corporal with glasses were leading a few paces in front of the others. They slowed to a halt, as if waiting, and behind them the others also stopped and stood motionless. Lesley's jaw tightened as he stared down through the observation port. They were staking their lives on his answer to the question he had been grappling with. "That's what you want, isn't it," Jean said with a hint of accusation in her voice. "You'd like us to be the way they are. But have you really thought about what that would mean? No standards, no order to anything, no morality. . . I mean, what kind of a way would that be for Jay and Marie to grow up? But the descendants of that seed would return and populate Earth once again. In six months the refitting of the ship would be completed, and it would plunge once more into the void to make the first exploratory voyage back, a voyage which would require less than a third of the time of the outward journey. Lechat would be the Mission Director, Fallows the Chief of Engineering, and Adam would head one of the scientific teams, Colman would be returning 'too, as an Engineering officer; Kath would fulfill her dream of seeing Earth; and Alex would be about Jay's age by the time they returned to Chiron. Many of the old, familiar faces, some through nostalgia and others through restlessness after five years of planet-bound living, would take to space again in the ship that had been their home for twenty years. For a moment, Micky perceived in their young visitor a quality that chilled her because it was like a view. And where was the girl's brother, Lukipela, to whom she referred so mysteriously? Was he Preston. childhood, her defenses against a cruel life had been anger and

stubbornness. She'd seen herself as the of burning gasoline, airborne flaming debris, and a bullet-fast barrage of shrapnel are more likely to be. Instead of a lawn with trees, a narrow covered patio shaded the front entrance. Here in back, a strip of "Oh, Christ!" Driscoll began fussing with a napkin to clean it off, in the process managing to trail a corner of it through the soup and brush it against the hem of the second guard's jacket as he turned back from the soup. Poisonous or not, the snake had struck at Leilani's face, her face, which was the best thing she had going. "Love," Geneva declared, and her eyes grew misty with the memory of that long-ago passion. "Does the little orange lady like the dark out?" Rickster asked. Jean spun round and ran back to the elevator. Chiron was stealing her life, her children, her friends, and now even her husband. For an instant she wished that the Mayflower II would send down its bombs and wipe every Chironian off the surface of the planet. Then they would be able to begin again, cleanly and decently. Ashamed of the thought, she pushed it from her mind as she came back into the lounge. She gazed across at the cabinet on the far side, and after a moment of hesitation went over to pour a large, stiff drink. GENERAL J STORMBEL did not make mistakes, and he was not accustomed to being held responsible for the mistakes of others; people under him tended to find out early on that they did not make mistakes. Their acceptance of the standards and disciplines that he imposed provided a permanent assertion of his symbolic presence for as far as his sphere of command and influence extended, and served as a constant reminder that his authority was not to be trifled with. Displays of laxness represented an acknowledgment that was less than total, and signified lapses of mindfulness of the omnipresence that his authority projected-as if people were beginning to forget that what he said mattered. Stormbel didn't like that. He didn't like people acting as if he didn't matter. Jay was beginning to see the connection. "Measures up with respect to what?" he asked. "What's the standard?" Farnhill looked uneasy and seemed a trifle awkward. "Well, as far as I could gather, a woman known as Kath seems to be in charge of a lot of it . . . as much as anybody's in charge of anything in this place. I haven't actually met her though." The room responded with murmurs of amazement, but most of those present didn't realize the significance. Beside Colman, Celia and Lechat were staring, and from the platform Sirocco was directing an inquiring look in their direction. Celia turned her head to look at Colman. "I don't believe this," she whispered. "Who is that corporal?". Besides, Leilani didn't want to purge herself of all her toxins. She was comfortable with her toxins. Her particularly old, but they are going to be a great team. grandkids someday, because the big truck doesn't clip even one pump, doesn't barrel into any of the. Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an. "A nice sentiment, I agree," Kalens said. "But they still should be taught some manners." In response to this wild irrationality, with the potential for violence implicit in this woman's nuclear-hot. "You're sweet." the exit. 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. "Scribe", Wellesley said in a still angry voice to the computer recording the proceedings. "Delete the statement about an offensive response and everything following it." "And that would be enough to fix something?"

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