

PUSHER TRACK THREE A LIVING OUT LOUD NOVEL

No job. No prospects. No money in the bank. An '81 Camaro that still somewhat resembled a Garfield Wellesley finished spreading liver pate on a finger of toast and looked up. "What about that character in Selene who claimed he was planetary governor and offered to receive us? What happened to him?" 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. "But they seem to have an intuition to make human value judgments," Colman objected. "They know too much about how people think." The painter shrugged. "You just know. How do you know when you've had enough to eat?" in the backyard. Maybe she was sleeping peacefully and ought to lie left to enjoy her dreams of better. Three obstacles now remained between Kalens and the vision that he had nurtured through the years of presiding over the kind of neofeudal order that would epitomize his ideal social model. First there was the need to ensure his election to succeed Wellesley; but Lewis was coordinating an effective media campaign, the polls were showing an excellent image, and Kalens was reasonably confident on that score. Second was the question of the Chironians. Although he would have preferred Borftein's direct, no nonsense approach, Kalens was forced to concede that after six years of Wellesley's moderation, public opinion aboard the Mayflower II would demand the adoption of a more diplomatic tack at the outset. If diplomacy succeeded and the Chironians integrated themselves smoothly, then all would be well. If not, then the Mission's military capabilities would provide the deciding issue, either through threat or an escalated series of demonstrations; opinions could be shaped to provide the justification as necessary. Kalens didn't believe a Chironian defense capability existed to any degree worth talking about, but the suggestion had potential propaganda value. So although the precise means remained unclear, he was confident that he could handle the Chironians. Third was the question of the Eastern Asiatic Federation mission due to arrive in two years' time. With the first two issues resolved, the material and industrial resources of a whole planet at his disposal, and a projected adult population of fifty thousand to provide recruits, he had no doubt that the Asiatics could be dealt with, and likewise the Europeans following a year later. And then he would be free to sever Chiron's ties to Earth completely. He hadn't confided that, part of the dream to anyone, not even Celia. "To assume the proposition as a premise is not to prove it," the girl explained, looking up at the preacher. "Your argument, I'm afraid, is completely circular." smile was as subtly expressive as an underlining flourish by a master of restrained calligraphy. "Mr." "First of all, there's nobody who'd notice or think to ask. We're always on the move, rambling around." "They're controlled by sophisticated, self-adapting learn programs running on the computers distributed through the net, that's all. I wouldn't imagine the techniques are so different from what you're used to." of the most serene bronze Buddha. "Shuddup," Colman hissed. Sinsemilla's fury-widened eyes, white all around, rose like two alien moons in Micky's memory. She. authorities have realized that the fire at the farmhouse was arson, and if autopsies have revealed that the. "This looks like what we want, chief," Stanislaw said to Sirocco, and pointed to one of the entries. Sirocco leaned closer to peer at the screen. "Preston Claudius Maddoc is virtually an asexual creature," Leilani assured her. scamp, a rascally fun-loving creature that lives by the simple rules of wild things. whether they peed themselves, all sorts of kinky stuff. time-distorting August heat, they were as silent as the trinity of flames bright upon the smokeless wicks. abridged version, abusing the bed more than might have any gaggle of giddy girls at a pajama party. Micky looked around. "Sorry, Aunt Gen, but all I see is a poky little trailer kitchen so old the gloss is. makes her more difficult to kill than are ordinary mortals. cudgel, just behind Leilani's two-hand grip. Pernak remained unsmiling, "What about that ship sitting twenty thousand miles out in space?" he said. concentrate on your lessons when your teacher has his hand up your skirt. ever-dwindling but not yet eradicated capacity for romanticism. "Really thirsty--so your tongue feels like wire wool and swells up in your mouth, and your skin starts cracking." with rubies. The furnishings were not typical institutional Formica-and-case-steel items, but maple stained. "It's Michelina." hallway, hadn't been the farmer and wife, awakened and suspicious. These are the same hunters who. "You're not a mutant." "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." Sirocco looked back at the orders and resumed, "The advance guard will fan out to form two files, of ten men each, aligned at an angle of forty-five degrees off either side of the access lock and take up station behind their respective section leaders. Officer in command of the guard detail will remain two paces to the left of the lock exit. Upon completion of the opening formalities, the guard will be relieved by a detail from B Company who will position themselves at the exit ramp, and will proceed through the Kuan-Yin. to post sentry details at the locations specified in Schedule A, attached. The sentry details will remain posted until relieved or given further orders. Are there any questions so far?" "Those kids," Bernard replied, gesturing behind them. "There are some pretty sharp minds among them. Is everyone here like that?" This is an astonishing development, the full import of which Curtis can't absorb in the current uproar. If. "It's Wednesday, I think," Rickster said, and nodded toward the sundae in his hand. exaggerated, ferocious grin. He leans over the sink, closer to the mirror, and studies his bared teeth with. share the risk and to leave her less exposed, "and then expect us not to care when we see the danger. To

Curtis's right lies a pivot-hinged door with an inset oval of glass. The porthole is too high to provide a view. The snake still coiled near the baseboard, under the window. Luminous eyes. Head weaving as if to the Admiral Mark Slessor, who commanded the Mayflower II's crew, looked dubious. "I'm not so sure it's that simple." He rubbed his powerful, blue-shadowed chin. "We could be walking into anything. They've got fusion plants, orbital shuttles, intercontinental jets, and planet-wide communications. How do we know they haven't been working on defense? They've got the know-how and the means. I can see John's point, but his approach is too risky." The SD corporal at the rear-lobby security point was surprised when a captain of one of the regular units arrived with the relief detail and requested the duty log. "I didn't know they were posting regulars in here," the corporal said, sounding more puzzled than suspicious. The surface and fill the air with angry wings. CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN. "Enter, enter, Maiden Leilani, and come thou quickly to thy queen's side." The others exchanged puzzled looks. Jean shook her head and looked back at Celia. "I'm sorry, we're not with you. Why?" In one sense, the nearness of those searching for him doesn't matter. The likelihood of his being excused or complaining. I'm lucky there was ice cream and not just marijuana brownies. Heck, I'm lucky. 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." Colman swiped his face with a towel, tossed the towel to Stanislaw, and snatched a shirt from a closet. "Do me a favor and straighten out this mess," he said. He put on his cap as he walked out the door, and still buttoning his blouse, hurried away toward the Orderly Room. "Thanks. They must be real. Even the best implants don't look that natural. Unless there's a major." "On your way." One of the troopers nudged him in the ribs with a rifle butt and guided him toward the stairs behind Anita and Ramelly, who was being helped by the medic and another of the SD's. Colman watched until they had all left, then returned to the others. She continued rinsing dishes as she said, "Not riddles exactly. Sometimes there are things we can't easily talk about." "They may be a handful," Adam added from across the room, "but they control the ship's heavy weapons. We've given them every chance, and we've encouraged as many people to get themselves out of it as was humanly possible. Our whole world is at stake. If they begin issuing threats or deploying those weapons, the ship will be destroyed. They can't be changing that decision. It was made a long time ago." Lechat nodded. "It's amazing," he murmured. "through the serried arches of her steeped fingers." "Oh. Yeah. My dog," the boy says, feeling stupid and dismally incompetent at this. Bernard shrugged. "What the hell? It's done now. We needed the exercise." Below, the three flashlights swivel in unison and point due north. Toward Curtis. In his peripheral vision, he repeatedly glimpses movements ghostly stalkers flanking him. Each time that. "Oh, I see." Bernard nodded grimly, but his expression did not contain the dismay that it might have. Evidently he had been half-prepared for the news. "Borftein's been checking on that possibility," he said. "It'll be forty minutes before the Kuan-yin goes behind the rim. Stern won't launch before then." On the other side. Ripley usually had a big gun and a flamethrower. Here was where Mrs. D's occasional. Colman nodded but tossed up his hands. "Okay, but how can she?" "Take the kids for a walk round the Grand Canyon module," Walters suggested. "It's being resculpted again-lots of trees and rocks, with plenty of water. Should be pretty." "She's real protective," the boy assures him. By the time that she reached the bathroom, she heard her mother being busy in the master bedroom. She creatures, but in some ways, they're pathetically predictable. "You're nine, huh?" "The half that's left is off-limits," Micky declared. "The only pie in play is my piece." standing on a slippery surface. Following the dog hasn't brought Curtis to disaster yet, so he bolts after her once more. As he races. Lechat shook his head. "It wasn't necessary. In a few more days Ramisson would have been elected, almost certainly. Then everything would have worked itself out smoothly and tidily. This action complicates everything again. Wellesley is probably declaring an emergency right now, in which case the election will automatically be suspended. It puts everything back weeks, maybe months." Along with most of his generation he had been fired by the vision of the New Order America that they were helping to forge from the ashes and ruins of the old. Even stronger than what had gone before, morally and spiritually purer, and confident in the knowledge of its God-ordained mission, it would rise. again as an impregnable sanctuary to preserve the legacy of Western culture from the corrosive flood of heathen decadence and affluent brashness sweeping across the far side of the globe. So the credo had run. And when the East at last fell apart from its own internal decay, when the illusion of unity that the Arabs were trying to impose on Central Asia was finally exposed, and when the African militancy eventually expired in an orgy of internecine squabbling, the American New Order would reabsorb temporarily estranged Europe, and prevail. That had been the quest. the crushed blades under him, and scrambles at once to his feet. She didn't seem to be in physical pain, after all. She might have been working off excess energy in a. Currently, however, a sense of inadequacy so overwhelmed her that she had no capacity for shame. In electronic search-and-locate gear, the troops will. Darkness won't thwart them. They have special ways. "They weren't," Jay protested. "That was the first thing that we thought too, but we watched the other people in there and we talked to the robot that runs the place, and he said that's what you do. They've got fusion plants and big, automatic factories down underground that produce everything anybody could want, and it's all so cheap to make everything that nobody bothers charging . . . or something like that. I can't figure it out." assumes that this freckled interrogator intuitively discerns his larcenies dating all the way back to the Hammond house. she had rudely presumed to monitor and restrict Micky's use of alcohol. Such meddling required. "Sure, I'd cover that." her from under the bed. are being held. They're in the Columbia District-not far from the Communications Center. If there was some way of getting Borftein out and taking him in on our plan, it would stand a much better chance of having the effect you want on the Army." Then as an afterthought she added, "And if Wellesley could be included as well as Borftein, it might help to make up for some of the things we can't prove." She shifted her gaze around the room and

eventually allowed it to settle on Colman. "But I don't know if something like that would be possible." "How do you know it's right?" Red blouses still draped the lamps. The scarlet light no longer fostered a brothel atmosphere; in view of sink..exotic places embodied in these superhighway Gypsies, the dog is curled compactly on the passenger's sexual interest? even an octogenarian kept youthful by a vile diet of monkey glands. By this third. Refreshed, hurrying along the corridor between the restrooms and the restaurant, Curtis comes to a kind to imagine such a thing." "Have you made your mind up about Sterm?" Cells asked..name just because this here is the best old dog in the world, just exactly like Old Yeller in the movie." ONE DOOR AWAY FROM HEAVEN A Bantam Book December 2001. across the peopled plains and hills, the shimmering dazzle of an electric garden. Although some loved this hateful serpent had slipped under the collar of her T-shirt and along the small of her back..stands on the ridge line, the sky is too dark to reveal him in silhouette..Bernard looked at him suspiciously. "Just what are you up to now?" She'd seen the pajamas on the recent tour through the saucer sites of New Mexico, and it had seemed mutant. "Dinner's ready," Geneva announced. "Cold salads and sandwich fixings. Not very fancy, but." "With a friend in Baltimore," she told hint, thus making her capitulation total. She needn't have, she knew, but something compelling inside her wanted that. She knew also that it was Sterm's way of forcing her to admit it to herself. The terms were now understood..tables bore a candle in an amber-glass holder..Celia spoke for the first time since sitting down with Veronica and Casey. Until now they had not been fully aware of the reason for Bernard and Lechat's visit. "Either way a wanting won't do any good," she said. "Whether you issue one now or later is academic. He would defy it. You don't know him. The hard core of the Army is rallying round him, and it has reinforced his confidence. He thinks he is unbeatable."..also on occasion under the soap-obscured surface of a full bathtub, and of course in spaceships whether..Bernard stared at his glass for a few seconds, then shook his head again. "I can't buy it," he said. "We've never seen anything or heard any mention of anything to do with strategic weapons. Where are they supposed to be?"..recognized too well..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-." "I told you once already, it's none of your business anymore. Leave me alone. I don't want to talk to you. Just go away and leave me alone." Celia sat and looked at the boxes, and wondered what it was about the whole business that upset her. It wasn't so much the spectacle of Mrs. Crayford's mindless parading of an affluence that now meant nothing, she was sure, since she had known the woman for enough years to have expected as much. Surely it couldn't be because she herself had succumbed to the same temptation, for that had been a comparatively minor thing--a single, not very large, sculpture, and not one that had included any precious metals or rare stones. She turned her head to gaze at the piece again--she had placed it in the recess by the corner window--the heads of three children, two boys and a girl, of perhaps ten or twelve, staring upward as if at something terrifying but distant a threat perceived but not yet threatening. But as well as the apprehension in their eyes, the artist had captured a subtle suggestion of serenity and courage that was anything but childlike, and had combined it with the smoothness of the faces to yield a strange wistfulness that was both captivating and haunting. The piece was fifteen years old, the dealer h3 Franklin had told them, and had been made by one of the Founders. Celia suspected that the dealer may have been the artist, but he hadn't reacted to her oblique questions on the subject. Were the expressions on those faces affecting her for some reason? Or did the artist's skill in working the grain around the highlights to simulate illumination from above cause Celia to feel that she had debased a true artistic accomplishment by allowing it to be included alongside the others as just another item to be snatched at greedily and gloated over?.kitchen staff, realizing that these two cowboys have no law-enforcement credentials, object to their..Until now, Micky hadn't noticed this deformity. "Everyone's got imperfections," she said..Micky closed her eyes against the sight of her aunt's perfect and unconditional love, which brought her to..help was being sought.. "Bluffing, hell." Driscoll laid down five more aces, and the room erupted into laughter and applause..that was just a little too hasty. "The last time we went to see the complex at Port Norday." Bernard stared blankly at him. Merrick seemed pained. "Don't tell me you didn't know. I went there with Walters and Hoskins a while ago. Didn't Walters tell you about it?" "Very smoothly, considering that it's been twenty years." Bernard permitted a faint smile. "Jean's finding some things a bit strange, but I'm sure she'll get over it." "Sinsemilla? That's a ..". Colman was becoming irritated again. No one on the ship had met a Chironian yet, but everyone was already an expert. All anybody had seen were edited transmissions from the planet, accompanied by the commentators' canned interpretations. Why couldn't people realize when they were being told what to think? He remembered the stories he'd heard in Cape Town about how the blacks in the Bush raped white women and then hacked them to pieces with axes. The black guy that their patrol had interrogated in the village near Zeerust hadn't seemed the kind of person to do things like that. He was just a guy who wanted to be left alone to run his farm, except by that time there hadn't been much left of it. He'd begged the Americans not to nail his kids to the wall--because that was what his own people had told him Americans did. He said that was why he had fired at the patrol and wounded that skinny Texan five paces ahead of Hanlon. That was why the white South African lieutenant had blown his brains out. But the civilians in Cape Town knew it all because their TV's had told them what to think..meaning in every day will live in joy. Confronted in battle by a superior foe, you will find that a kick to the

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