



Description

The peaceful nation of Caladon has been cut off from the rest of the world for hundreds of years, until one day they are brutally attacked, and must find a way to defend themselves without betraying their non-violence ethics.

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Prologue

DALA - 391/5/38

Dala sat in a low chair in a corner of the bedroom with a small lamp lit beside her. She looked down at her baby son with adoration. Her fingers stroked the silky black hair while she watched the pumping of his rosy cheek as he nursed. She gave a contented sigh, still in awe of this miracle, this tiny being, barely six weeks old. Her son.

When his mouth relaxed, Dala lifted him to her shoulder. He let out a little burp of air, then sighed and closed his eyes. She stood up and carried him over to the cradle next to the bed.

Lin was lying on the bed, watching her with the baby. "The two of you make a beautiful picture," he said with a smile. "Is he asleep?"

Dala nodded. "What do you want to do now?" she said as she fastened her tunic.

"Feel like going for a walk? We'll be going home tomorrow, so it'll be our last chance to look around Tringbin for a while."

The young couple was visiting Dala's family for the Unity Day holiday, taking this opportunity to introduce them to the new baby.

"Yes, let's. I'm not tired. Maybe we can catch some of the fireworks. Mama can watch Lodan." Dala took one last look at the baby to make sure he was sleeping, then went to tell her mother they were going out for a little while.

"Where do you want to go?" Lin asked, taking her hand. "The beach?"

"No, let's go the other way, into town."

From somewhere near the city center, they saw fountains of multi-colored sparks rise into the sky and fade out one by one, followed by the faint crackling sounds of erupting chemicals. Before long the fireworks stopped, leaving a stillness broken only by the cry of a night bird.

"I guess that's the end of the fireworks," Lin commented, taking her hand.

"It doesn't matter." Dala replied. "It's such a beautiful night. Are you ready for the new video?" she asked, changing the subject.

“As ready as I’ll ever be. We’ve finished rehearsing, so if the costumes and sets are ready, we’ll begin filming when we get back.” He looked at Dala. “Do you miss it?”

“In some ways, but I wouldn’t change anything. Lodan is such a joy. I can’t bear to be away from him for even an hour.” She smiled to herself, thinking of the unexpected pleasure she got from being a mother. Before he was born, she had been excited by the thought of motherhood, she already loved her baby, but she wasn’t prepared for the intense feelings he kindled in her. Even thinking about him brought a pleasant ache to her breasts.

As Dala and Lin approached the center of town the voices of people out celebrating and the music of a dance band became audible, but by the time they reached the little park in the central square, the band was already beginning to pack up. People who had been dancing under the strings of orange lanterns started to gather their children and move towards home. The acrid chemical smell of fireworks still lingered in the air as the square emptied.

Dala and Lin took a turn around the square, then began to retrace their steps back to the house. The air was warm and fragrant with night-scented blossoms. Street lamps illuminated the way with an amber radiance. In the distance, a dog barked then abruptly fell silent.

As they turned into the street where Dala’s parents lived they heard several soft popping sounds, which at first they thought were more fireworks, then suddenly the night exploded in flames. They started to run in panic as the surrounding houses were engulfed with fire.

“Lin, is it our house?”

“I don’t know. Oh, Father in heaven, *nooo...*”

All around them, houses were blazing, people running out, some already in their night clothes, some clutching children or pets, others carrying whatever articles they could grab on their way out. The air was filled with the clamor of people shouting, children screaming in terror, dogs howling, the choking smell and crackle of burning timber, and the wail of sirens.

Lin looked around desperately for a sign of Dala’s parents, but when he reached the house, he saw it had received a direct hit. The whole structure was engulfed in fire, each window, its glass shattered by the heat, was filled with the terrible yellow and orange flames.

Lin heard an anguished wail behind him, “*No! My baby...*” and turned to see Dala collapse on the ground.

Amidst the flurry and confusion of the surprise attack, rescuers managed to get Dala to a hospital where she was sedated. When she woke up, it was daylight. At first, all she was aware of was a feeling of dread and horror grinding at her stomach, the kind of feeling that comes after a nightmare, but when she saw Lin slumped in a chair beside the bed, his eyes red from weeping and lack of sleep, his skin ashen, she knew it was no dream.

No, no, no, no, her mind kept saying, *it's not true. No, it can't be*, but she shied away from taking the thought further. She made a mewling sound, a tiny whimper. Lin slowly turned his face towards her and she saw it in his eyes; she didn't need to ask. She leaned towards him reaching out. Lin took her in his arms and together they rocked silently, sharing inexpressible anguish.

Vend - 391/5/38

There was something very strange about the recording Vend was listening to, as if another frequency was cutting in on the wave band. Evidently, whoever had been monitoring the recording had tried to tune into the other wavelength, but it only seemed to give out short bursts of garbled vocal and noise signals. He listened to the recording for a while then decided he might get more information by listening to a live broadcast. He plugged his earplug jacks into one of the receivers and switched it on. There was a lot of static and the same garbled signals he'd heard on the recording. He listened for a while, trying to tune in more clearly.

He was startled out of his concentration when the building was shaken by a thunderous boom. Pulling out the earplugs, he rushed to the window and saw one of the neighboring buildings engulfed in flames.

Thinking it must have been a gas explosion, he called emergency services. The operator sounded harried, on the verge of panic when he answered.

“Where are you calling from?” he asked

“The university,” Vend replied.

“I don't know when we'll be able to get to it,” the operator said. “There have been several hits here in town, in residential areas, so we'll have to take care of those first, unless it's a residence.”

“You mean there have been other explosions?” Vend asked.

“Yes,” the operator replied. “I’m sorry; I have to answer another call. If anyone’s hurt, call Emergency Medical.” The line was disconnected.

Vend Paritip was part of an exo-sociology program studying the language and culture of the Federated Republic of Katria, the FRK, at the University of Farwin in Dunis. The program had started soon after radio signals were first detected from the FRK in the year 10,345. Dunis was chosen as the best place to build a short wave receiver because of its altitude and the fact that there was nothing in the area to interfere with signals. It was also the most northerly site, the closest available to the FRK.

Vend had returned to Dunis on the evening of Unity Day after visiting his family in Medwin, the major seaport and capital of the island of Farwin, approximately three hours away by rail. There had been a significant increase in radio activity from the north recently and he had been eager to get back to work. After a few hours sleep in the university dormitory where he lived, he had made some tea and taken it with him to the lab to listen to the latest tapes.

Vend looked out the window again and saw the university emergency response team had arrived. Then the general emergency alarm started to wail, an undulating siren that kept repeating at rapid intervals.

He turned on the local radio and heard that simultaneous attacks had fallen on most of the major towns on the Island of Farwin, explosive incendiary devices dropped from the air. Vend was torn between the desire to stay and listen to the radio and the urge to go outside and see what was happening. In the end, action won. He left the lab and rushed out of the building to see if there was anything he could do to help.

The burning building he’d seen from the lab window was the university library and it appeared to be a complete loss. Because it was a holiday, nobody had been in the building so there were no casualties, but it was tragic to see original documents, the accumulated learning of thousands of years, turning to ashes. The campus fire fighters, who were all volunteers, did their best to keep the blaze from spreading, but they couldn’t save the building.

When the fire died down, Vend’s attention turned to the orange glow in the sky over Dunis. The university was built on a hill overlooking the town, but from where he was standing, the view was blocked by a grove of trees. He went down the

path through the trees until he reached the edge and the whole town lay before him. Fires were raging in various places, pouring heavy smoke into the sky. There didn't seem to be any pattern to the bombing, random clusters had fallen here on houses, there on business centers. The undulating wail of emergency sirens—normally reserved for natural disasters—seemed to be coming from every direction.

Dunis was not a large town. The permanent population was about twenty-eight thousand with an additional thousand to twelve hundred university staff and students. At the time of the attack, most of the university people had been away for the holiday.

Vend felt useless standing around watching the havoc outside, so he returned to the lab to see if he could find more information on the radio.

Solvan - 391/5/38

Solvan woke with a start. It took him a few seconds to realize what had roused him. The communicator was chirping. Without turning on the light, he reached out and picked up the receiver. "Aldacarn," he said.

"Sorry to wake you, Si, but there's an emergency." Solvan recognized the voice of the night operator at the National Assembly building. She sounded tense. "We just received a signal from Medwin. There's been an attack on the several towns on the island. The director wants everyone on the External Affairs Committee to come to the Assembly as soon as possible."

Solvan swung his feet to the floor and turned on the light. "Great heavens! What kind of attack?" he asked, instantly alert.

"They seem to have been attacked from the air with incendiary devices," the operator said.

"Merciful Father! The air? That's impossible. Nobody has aircraft with the range to attack Caladon." Solvan had already slipped off his nightshirt and was pulling on his leggings with his free hand. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, Si. They sent a written confirmation—from Medwin. They say the bombs were dropped from balloons."

"So they could have been launched from ships." Solvan ran his hand through his wiry hair. "I'll be there in a quarter of an hour."

Solvan noticed Onda was awake, watching anxiously, and asked the operator, "Was there much damage? Casualties?"

"Some casualties, Si, but they only gave me a brief report. Some buildings on fire. Sorry, Si Aldacarn, I have some more calls to make."

"All right, Cleovan, I'll let you go. I'm on my way."

"Solvan, what in the world is happening?" Onda asked. She was now out of bed, pulling on a wrap.

"An air attack on Farwin."

"But who ...?"

"I'll give you two guesses." Solvan slipped on his jacket and walked towards the door, shaking his head. "Lord in heaven, if I'd thought it would come to this ..."

Onda followed Solvan out into the hall. "It's not your fault, darling. Everyone thought it was the right thing to do." She put her arms around his neck and kissed him. "They certainly picked a good time, didn't they?"

The previous day had been their most important national holiday, Unity Day, the 38th of Fivemonth, when most Caladonians were on vacation. The year was 391, seven years after Caladon had elected to open up limited diplomatic and trading relations with some of the world's more advanced nations, after centuries of self-imposed quarantine.

"I know." He pecked her cheek and turned towards the door. "I have to go, my love," he said. "They'll be issuing bulletins on the radio soon, so you'll be able to follow what's happening. Pray it's only an isolated incident and not the prelude to something worse."

Solvan closed the door and walked through the covered walkway to where he kept his personal surface transporter. He unplugged it and reeled in the electrical cord, then lowered himself into the seat and started the motor.

It was three hours past midnight when Solvan drove from his home in the foothills south of the capital through the dark, silent streets to the Federal Center. The government center was a complex of buildings in a park-like setting on the west side of the city. The National Assembly was the largest building in the complex, housing as it did the upper and lower chambers, where legislation was debated and voted on, and the offices of various government-appointed councils such as the External Affairs Council of which Solvan was the chairman.

He arrived at the Assembly building to find the lights blazing in many of the windows. A *perfect target for an aerial attack*, he thought. *Thank the Father they don't have aircraft to reach this far inland.* As he drove through the park, he saw other people hurrying in on foot and in private vehicles. Solvan drove down the ramp that led to the parking area under the building and found an empty slot. He left the vehicle without plugging it in, knowing the battery held enough of a charge to get him home, whenever he would be able to get away.

As Solvan made his way to the moving staircase that led up into the building, he saw the unmistakable form of fellow committee member, Juli Betalogan ahead of him on the staircase. Juli was almost as tall as Solvan who was unusually tall for a Caladonian, and like him, she also had black curly hair, only she wore hers long, tied back with a scarf, whereas Solvan had his cut short.

"Juli," Solvan called.

She turned, concern on her face. "Solvan. My heavens, what's happening?" She stopped climbing and waited for him to catch up.

"I don't know," he replied, "apart from the fact that there've been some aerial attacks on Farwin. I don't know who's responsible or why."

"What a nightmare! And it would have to come on a holiday."

"I'm sure they had that in mind when they planned the attack."

They hurried up the stairs to the third floor and down the wide hallway to the council chamber. On the way, Solvan stopped at the communications desk to pick up the latest signals.

Part One - Prelude

Chapter 1 - Vend 383

“I can’t believe everyone goes around armed,” Vend said.

Vend and his colleagues in the exo-sociology lab held regular meetings to discuss their findings and to attempt to put Katrian culture into some sort of perspective.

“Well, not everyone—it’s mostly criminals and law enforcement—I’m sure there are lots of people who don’t,” Kip interjected. Kip Farabern was the director of the program founded by his parents, Fara Amasol and Bern Lorasind, in 366.

“But they still seem to be available to anyone who wants them,” Vend continued. “Can you imagine so many people going around armed with lethal weapons?”

His friend, Yula, grimaced. “It’s no wonder they have such a high crime rate and so many homicides.”

“I think a lot of people buy firearms to protect themselves from criminals as well,” Kip said.

“I guess that’s how so many children get hurt,” Yula added. “Playing with their parent’s weapons. It’s so tragic.”

“Don’t forget domestic violence,” another student said. “People killing their spouses in arguments just because the weapons are handy.”

“It’s the drug laws that baffle me,” Kip said. “It doesn’t make sense to ban some drugs, making it a criminal offense to use them, while others, just and dangerous, are perfectly legal.”

“I know. Just because people take things to make them feel good, or alter their consciousness, they’re made into criminals.”

“It’s because most of them are addictive. It’s not just using drugs; it’s selling them. They think that’s much more serious. Look at the fuss they make about drug dealers.”

“It’s so hypocritical. They advertise and spur people on to use things like *taf*, which they know is addictive and causes heart disease.”

“And what about that stuff they smoke, *tarnic*—ugh, can you imagine filling your lungs with smoke? They’re aware it’s carcinogenic, yet it’s legal.”

“Not only that,” Kip said. “The drug laws create a huge criminal class. If none of these substances was prohibited, there would be far less crime. The criminals make such enormous profits from growing and processing and distributing drugs that they can afford to pay huge bribes to government and law enforcement officials to ensure they don’t change anything. If there were no banned substances, they would be out of business.”

“But wouldn’t people still want to use the drugs?”

“Probably. People who aren’t happy always look for something to make them feel better, regardless of whether it’s dangerous.”

“I guess that’s why there is so much petty crime—robberies and burglaries—to get the money to pay for the drugs.”

“But what would they do if it wasn’t illegal to take the drugs?”

“Well for one thing, the government might be able to control their use. They do control things like alcoholic drinks to make sure they meet certain safety standards and aren’t sold to people under a certain age. They are also a good source of revenue because of the taxes they bring in.”

“I can’t understand why there is so much poverty, why people are so unhappy that they want to use drugs,” a newer student said. “The FRK seems like such a rich country.”

“It is,” Kip explained. “But there are still a great many people living in poverty. Some people are very rich, much richer than anybody in Caladon, but there’s a lot of unemployment.”

“Why’s that?”

“I’m not sure. Some people are disabled or have psychological illnesses or are too old to work.”

“But don’t they get assistance?”

“They don’t have the social safety nets we have. They have disability insurance and old age pensions, but they are always being cut back and are never adequate. Not only that, it’s very hard to qualify for a pension and many people are too weak or ill to go through the process. Apparently it needs real persistence.”

“And every time there’s an election, the candidates always use social benefits as a weapon, accusing the other side of being too free spending public money and promising to cut back on benefit programs.”

“But why doesn’t the government have enough funds? Surely they must get good revenue from natural resources; it’s a big country.”

“Ah, that seems to be the crux of the matter,” Kip responded. “Enormous private fortunes have been made in the FRK by allowing natural resources, minerals, timber and so on, to be held and exploited by private individuals and corporations. These entities control the prices, and often have tremendous influence on the government as well.”

This was one reason why the FRK had few social safety nets. Whereas in Caladon, the profits from natural resources—which are leased out for set periods—are used to pay pensions and other benefits, in FRK they had to rely on taxes.

The work fascinated Vend. He was teamed with Yula Ilakip. She was from Wenbin on the mainland. Yula, who was a year older than Vend, was tall and strong with light brown hair and gray eyes. Her quick mind and sense of humor made it a pleasure to work with her and they soon became close friends.

The sheer volume of data was overwhelming and were it not for the way the program was organized, they wouldn’t have known where to start. First everything was broken down into types of broadcast: news, drama, music, athletic events, public interest, documentary, and so on. Some categories yielded less interesting material than others, but they listened to them all. A team was appointed to work on each category. Each member of the team would take a broadcast tape to listen to and break it down into areas of study such as history, domestic customs, agriculture, crime. He would copy the relevant portion of the tape into the appropriate database. Other teams worked on cross-referencing the databases.

Vend and Yula were involved compiling reports on crime and the law in the FRK. Some of their findings were truly astonishing to the Caladon team when they compared Katrian crime figures with their own. Not only were the types of crimes very unlike those Caladonians face, the methods of dealing with them were completely different too. For example, the homicide rate in some of the major cities in the FRK was outrageously high, as many as one or two murders per week in the capital, that's about ninety to a hundred and sixty each year. These killings were often perpetrated during the commission of other crimes such as robbery, kidnapping and drug dealing.

They spent hours together, discussing their research into the alien culture.

"It seems crazy to let them out again into society without any rehabilitation," Yula commented.

"What gets me is that there's no consistency in the sentences; it's as if the trial is a contest to see which advocate can make the most compelling case and sway the jury to his point of view. It doesn't matter if they lie, or bribe, or suppress evidence."

"What about that man last week who killed all his children and only got a five year sentence? I couldn't believe it. He probably had plenty of money to pay a good advocate."

In Caladon, convicted murderers received the death penalty when there were no mitigating circumstances and no hope of rehabilitation. Homicide was rare, however. The last murder in Caladon had taken place nineteen years earlier.

"I know. At least they should have isolated him permanently from society. I don't understand why they don't isolate all habitual criminals and give them some useful work to do."

"Remember that criminal they interviewed a few weeks ago? He said he learned more in prison about being a successful criminal than he ever knew before he was caught. He said other, more experienced prisoners told him where he had made mistakes and how to avoid them next time."

"It's as if the prisons are schools for crime. They don't make any effort to rehabilitate them before letting them loose again."

“It’s insane. It’s no wonder they have so much crime. I don’t understand why they don’t see that.”

“I think a lot of people do. It’s just not a popular cause. Every time anyone talks about reforms, he gets accused of being soft on criminals!”

“They seem to have a completely different set of values—all they seem to care about is making a profit from everything and getting rich.”

“I know, it’s pure materialism. They don’t care about people at all. Whether they’re poor and homeless, starving and sick, there’s no provision to take care of them.”

“It’s a crazy system. The way they’re going, they’ll have nothing left in a few years, then they’ll start looking for somewhere else to—I almost said loot—get their raw materials.”

The Dunis team monitored a presidential election in 386 and everyone was amazed at the amount of money spent by the candidates on trying to sway the voters to their points of view, not that there is much difference in ideas between the two major parties. They attacked each other viciously with accusations of all kinds of depravity and corruption.

“Can you believe this?” Vend said. “Spending all that money just to get elected?”

“What gets me is how everybody has the same voting power. Criminals, people with subnormal intelligence, uneducated,” Yula replied. “I suppose that’s how they end up with such a system—it’s easier to control and manipulate public opinion. When the majority’s badly educated and uninformed, it’s easier to fool them with demagoguery and half-truths.”

Chapter 2 - Solvan 384

“How did it go?” Onda asked. She had seen Solvan’s transporter turn into the driveway and was waiting at the door to hear the news.

As a councilor in the National Assembly, Solvan Aldacarn had actively supported the idea of opening up communications with the outside world. After a lengthy debate, this was the day when the final vote was taken.

He slipped off his outdoor shoes and put on house shoes by the door. “We won. But it was close—eleven to nine in favor.”

He took her hand and together they went out onto the terrace at the back of the house from which they had a magnificent view of the city and the river.

Their eight year-old daughter, Lili, was lounging on a chair in the shade of a vine draped trellis.

“How’s my angel?” Solvan kissed her forehead and gently stroked hair which was dark and curly like his.

“I’m fine, Papa,” she replied, her eyes sparkling.

With a sigh, he sank into one of the chairs and picked up the glass of iced fruit juice from the table. “What have you been doing today?” he asked Lili.

“Oh, let me see. Carl took me for a ride in the park.” Carl was her eighteen-year-old brother. “Then we had lunch and I helped mama in the garden, then I listened to a book while I waited for you to come home.”

“It sounds as if you kept pretty busy,” Solvan said, taking her hand. He looked at the tanned little fingers lying on his strong palm, touched by their fragility. He gave the hand a gentle squeeze, then turned to Onda. “Where is Carl? I thought he’d be waiting to hear the news.”

“He went back to the university. He can catch it on the radio. I think he has an important engagement tonight,” Onda replied.

“Of the female kind?” Solvan asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Probably. I can’t imagine any other kind being important enough to miss having supper with his family.”

“He’s got a new girlfriend,” Lili said, grinning.

“How do you know?” Solvan teased.

“He kept talking about her, while we were at the park. Her name’s Tiki. Isn’t that a funny name?” she giggled.

“It’s a bit unusual, but it’s a nice name,” Onda replied. She sipped her drink, then turned to Solvan. “What happens now? I mean about the new legislation.”

“Well, once the president signs the bill, we’ll be sending out feelers to Mergansor and the FRK, to see if they’ll agree to exchange ambassadors. We have to set up an international trade commission to go along with the ambassadors and discuss our trade policy.”

“We’re not going to be open to unrestricted trade are we?”

“No. Of course not. Natural resources, for example, will be restricted.”

“How?”

“Well—we’ve already discussed this at length in the assembly—we’re not exporting any fossil fuels or heavy metals. At least not until they start to use them responsibly; they already having terrible pollution problems in the northern hemisphere.”

Chapter 3 - Dala 385

When Dala entered the theatre by the performers’ entrance, she saw everyone crowded round the notice screen, their voices mingling in an excited commotion.

“What’s going on?” she asked.

Sachi Lilavend, a fellow actress, turned at the sound of her voice. “Dala! Guess what? We’ve been chosen as the first entertainment company to go on a tour of Katria.”

“Who? All of us?”

“You, me and Malon and Lin, and some students ...”

Dala Marikel was a performer with the Caladon National Video and Theater Company. She was one of the country’s leading actresses along with Sachi. Lin Sofitam and Malon Jofin were their male counterparts. Dala was petite and slender with straight black hair and dark, almond-shaped eyes. In contrast, Sachi was tall and had dark brown, wavy hair and dark grey eyes.

Dala gave a little squeal and hugged Sachi. “That’s so exciting!” she said. “When are we going?”

“Next month.”

Dala recognized Lin's voice and felt his arms slip round her waist from behind. She twisted round and reached up on her toes to kiss him.

The make-up and wardrobe director, Vero Caramarc—a motherly woman in her fifties—joined the actors “Come on, boys and girls, time to start getting ready.”

“Are you going on the trip to Katria, Vero?” Dala asked.

“Of course. Who do you think is going to keep you all in line and make sure you behave properly?”

They laughed and dispersed to their dressing rooms.

It was an exciting, scary time. Caladon, the only major nation in the southern hemisphere, had been closed to outside influences for several centuries—isolated from the more backward nations in the northern hemisphere—and now, suddenly, people were venturing abroad. Caladonians still believed other nations to be hopelessly uncivilized and dangerous, but for a change, instead of cutting themselves off, they were going to offer them a model, probably hoping to civilize them by example. They realized later that this attitude was hopelessly naive and arrogant.

Caladon was not opening up completely to trade or cultural exchanges. They couldn't allow the more debased forms of entertainment into the country, nor would they export raw materials or technology that might be dangerous in the wrong hands. They wouldn't give visitors' permits very readily, and immigration was out of the question, except in rare cases of exceptionally gifted individuals.

Sharing the tour with the National Theatre Company was a young people's musical ensemble from Ching, and a dance troupe from Seling. The entire party comprised around forty people, including the Caladon interpreter and the Katrian guide.

In exchange, the FRK sent their National Ballet Company and the National Armed Forces Band to tour Caladon. Although they didn't suspect it at the time, many people later believed that the latter group may have had another agenda in addition to putting on concerts.

After a month's preparation, the troupe set out by ship from the port of Wenbin. The ocean voyage was a novel experience for many of them. They completed the voyage under sail, taking advantage of the prevailing winds and ocean current, and only used the ship's engines for maneuvering in port. Caladon didn't have many passenger ships because, until then, nobody went abroad except for vacation visits to the Trinale Islands. One of the vessels used for crossing to the Trinales was diverted for the trip to Katria.

The heat was ferocious when they reached their first port of call, Braglatoglin, which is very close to the equator. Brag, as they called it, is the capital city of Pangobibi, an independent nation in the southern part of the continent of Katria. They were stopping here to take on fresh supplies before continuing north to the FRK. The passengers were informed they could go ashore for a few hours to look around, while the ship took on fresh provisions.

Dala and the rest of the troupe were lined up along the ship's rail as it reached the dockside.

"Phew, what a smell!" Sachi exclaimed, holding her nose.

"Yug, look at all the garbage," Lin said. "See over there," he pointed at a pile of rubble in a corner of the dock, "it looks like a dead animal. That's probably what stinks."

"Look at the people," Dala said. "They haven't got any hair. Even the women."

"Maybe they shave it all off."

"Maybe they don't have hair."

"They don't have any clothes either," Malon laughed.

It was true. The dark-skinned natives wore nothing but a piece of cloth that went between their legs and looped over a cord tied around their waists.

When the time came for them to disembark, they filed down the gangplank, the women dressed in short filmy tunics, and the men in sleeveless shirts and shorts. They'd all abandoned their leggings because of the heat, and wore dark lenses and wide-brimmed hats to protect them from the hot sun.

A crowd of people had gathered to watch the ship dock and when they saw Caladonians coming down the gangplank, they broke into laughter, pointing at them and jumping up to get a better look, as if they'd never seen light-skinned people before. They were as much a source of wonder to the Pangos as the Pangos were to them.

Their guide was a native of Pangobibi. Dressed a little differently from his countrymen and women in deference to the visitors, he wore a shirt over his loincloth and a hat of woven grass. They walked away from the dock on one of the city narrow, unpaved streets. The crowd followed them, shouting and jostling around until the guide shooed them away, after which they followed more quietly, at a distance.

A family group passed them, the woman with a baby on her back, secured with a long piece of cloth, the father walking ahead with a boy of about four. Dala noticed that each member of the family, even the children had a red design like an elaborate cross on the forehead. The man had several patterns on his chest in red and blue, while the woman had bands of green and red around her upper arm and across her breasts.

"I wonder what those patterns mean," Dala said when they had passed

"Probably some sort of status thing," said Cal, their interpreter. "Let me ask the guide."

A short exchange ensued during which the guide stopped walking and started a long explanation complete with gestures and demonstrations to illustrate his points.

"It's a bit complicated, but as far as I can make out, the patterns are tattoos. Some of them indicate the person's ancestral tribe, some are social status, and some religious. I would imagine there is little likelihood of a person rising above his status with permanent marks on his face and body."

"But it would be to their advantage if they had high status," Lin said.

They moved on. The street was like a bazaar with people selling all manner of goods: baskets, painted pots, livestock, cloth, fruit and vegetables, caged birds and other things the Caladonians couldn't identify. The aroma of spices and overripe fruit filled the air, mingled with the smell of urine and garbage.

The noise was a deafening clamor of people shouting, dogs barking, the shrill cries of captive birds in their cages of woven cane, the bleats and squeals of animals being sold for butchering, and the metallic clangs of bells and cymbals.

After walking for about half an hour up the dusty street that ran inland from the docks, they were sweaty and tired, overwhelmed by the medley of sights, smells, and sounds.

“Is there somewhere we could rest for a moment?” Dala asked. “Preferably a shady place.” She wiped her forehead with the scarf hanging from her wrist, then took a sip from her water bottle.

After another discussion with the guide, they were led away from the main street into an avenue overshadowed by trees. The houses on this street were large, built of plaster-covered brick. Most of the buildings were painted white and stood well back from the road behind hedges of blossoming shrubs, their driveways closed off with wrought iron gates.

“I wonder who lives here,” Lin said. “You can be sure it’s not those people we saw on the street.”

The guide explained that many of the houses belonged to foreigners, diplomats and traders, although a few were occupied by government officials. He led them through an open gate into a large courtyard with tables set out under trees. The guide gestured for them to sit at the tables while he went up to the house and spoke to a man at the door. He returned a few seconds later followed by the servant carrying a tray. While the server placed iced drinks on the table, the guide moved away and sat on the ground under a nearby tree. Only one or two other tables were occupied, mostly by men in white jacket and trouser suits who were also sipping drinks. Although these men were light-skinned like the Caladonians, they were obviously from another part of the world. They had lighter hair and eyes than Dala and her companions, and were taller and more muscular. The two groups eyed each other curiously, without animosity.

“Maybe they’re Katrians,” Dala said.

As she spoke, two of the men rose from their table and walked to the gate. As they passed the Caladon tables, they raised their hats and ducked their heads, almost like bowing.

"I guess they could be," Lin replied. "They look friendly enough."

"Strange kind of restaurant," Sachi said, looking around. "Nobody's eating anything."

"It's probably a bit early for lunch." He stopped and said something to the guide, then turned back to his companions "I think it's some sort of club," Cal explained. "Only for foreigners."

After they'd finished the drinks, they returned to the street and started back in the direction of the ship, this time veering away from the main street into a residential area. They saw the little houses—hardly big enough to contain two rooms—made of baked mud with roofs of woven sticks and leaves where the ordinary people lived. The houses had no glass in the windows, and no doors, just empty gaps in the walls. Domestic animals—some yellowish-brown fowls and little fat grey animals with short legs and squeaky cries—wandered freely in and out of the houses. Small children sat playing in the dirt and animal droppings—there was no grass or flowers, not even trees or shrubs for shade, just a few thorn bushes and piles of junk in the dry dust.

When they reached the street that ran along the docks, they saw a group of tall, thin men with light brown skin and narrow beak-like noses. They wore white garments that looked like sheets with holes in the middle to fit over their heads. The robes covered them completely from the neck to the ground and were cinched around the waist with cords that had small leather bags hanging from them. Some of them also had dangerous-looking daggers in their belts.

"Those men don't look like Pangos," Dala exclaimed.

"They're from a country called Andor, east of here, across the mountains," the guide informed them. "They're traders."

Dala watched with interest as the men passed by leading long-legged pack animals loaded with bundles of goods. She saw dark, glittering eyes peering out from under the men's prominent brows, mysterious and inscrutable.

They arrived back at the ship in time to refresh before lunch after which, the vessel weighed anchor and left the port of Braglatoglin. The next leg of the journey took them to the Katrian port of Suplicsic on the south-west coast of

the FRK where they would leave the Caladonian ship. The rest of the journey to the capital, Lanartic, was to be overland by rail.

Calendar

There are 396 days in the Caladonian planetary year. These are divided into ten months of forty or thirty-nine days. The weeks are five days long, giving each month eight weeks.

The calendar starts from the time first people from the northern hemisphere ventured south and discovered the solitary island continent of Caladon approximately ten thousand years earlier. This account takes place between the years 10,383 and 10,391, which are shortened to 383 and 391 respectively. Other nations don't use the same calendar, therefore the dates in Rogan's Journal have been converted to the Caladon calendar.

Special Dates

Unity Day 5/38 celebrates the date of unification of the nation which originally consisted of several small kingdoms and two distinct races, the Yellow race and the Nordic race. The other special day is Mothers' Day, which celebrates the harvest and the value placed on motherhood and parenting.

Education

The objective of the education system is to turn every student into a self-reliant citizen, equipped with a variety of basic skills, and to give every child the opportunity of discovering the occupation for which he is most suited and from which he will derive the most satisfaction.

Each child attends workshops from the age of five, practicing alongside professionals. The youngest students spend a few weeks each in a variety of shops learning simple skills such as basic nutrition, hygiene, animal care, gardening, etc. Each shop is equipped with an electronic library which students are encouraged to use to expand their knowledge.

While learning practical skills, they also learn basic academic skills: reading, writing and math. (If you plant the seedlings four centimeters apart, how many will you need to plant a three-meter row?) The Caladonians have discovered that if children can see a practical purpose for learning an academic skill, they will be more eager to study it. In addition to workshops, students spend about a quarter of their time—one day per week—in "play-shops" where they engage in art, music, dance, games and sports.

Reluctant Warriors

Students progress to more complex skills as they get older: healthy living, mechanics, building, agriculture, textiles, cooking, carpentry, etc. Once a student reaches the age of twelve, he generally has an idea of what career he would like to enter. From there he can continue in the workshop system as an apprentice, honing his skills to a professional level and coaching younger students, or transfer to a college for the formal education required for professional occupations. Some students choose to combine the two.

Every adult who interacts with children plays a part in imparting moral and ethical values. The only compulsory subject is parenting. A young adult is not permitted to marry or "bond" until he or she has a parenting certificate.

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