

Chapter Twelve

Prisoners

Magic is merely the art of misdirection. In expert hands, however, it might as well really be magic.

- The Tyrant Ratok, Autobiography II

"How are we going to rescue Cathy and the others?" Jacob wanted to know, "We've managed to wreck the boat they were using, and the flyer hasn't been up since yesterday. But I still don't see how it helps us."

"Ed and Tad have been scouting around, using the river for cover," said Caryl, "and they reported seeing the flyer being taken apart before being lifted back into the ship. Do you think Fred managed to do what the Prof asked?"

"I hope so, but he's not come back. I'm worried about him."

"Your Fred can look after himself," grinned Welland. "Remember the catowls chose not to make contact with us for over four hundred years. I'm sure the Pirates won't expect him to be responsible, even if they do notice his presence."

"Maybe he's inside with Cathy?" suggested Caryl. "It would be a good idea for him to go in and find out what's happening, and if he were inside we could know what they know without the pirates knowing we knew, how we knew, or what we knew."

Jacob laughed for the first time since Cathy had been abducted. "Caryl, you are priceless. I wish I knew!" and he laughed again, a laugh more of tired tension and maybe even a touch of hysteria rather than mirth. Nevertheless, the mood of depression was broken. Welland glanced at the others in turn; Bullen, the injured Akhtier, Toni and Ann, and the two citizens Zabney and Singh. The hospital room was getting crowded, the citizens impatient; something had to be done soon. Toni caught his eye, and glanced at Twiss, Welland understood immediately.