

Anatomy of a Short Story - Rescue

By

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This piece is something new for me. Here I'm going to delve into my short story, *Rescue*, and show you, the reader, how the scenes were set, how the characters were developed, and key characters' backstories and motivations by explaining the meaning behind each sentence, paragraph, and passage. Readers rarely have this opportunity to glimpse behind the curtain, so to speak, unless they are studying literary theory or creative writing. I hope you enjoy the experience of reading how a work is developed.

This work is in two parts. Part 1 is the story, and Part 2, is the story and the analysis.

To make it easier to differentiate between the story and the analysis, the story will be in Times New Roman font, and the analysis will be in Bahnschrift Light font. The horizontal lines separate the text from the analysis. The asterisks, “*”, are part of the story and are there for structure and to divide the story into its logical parts.

This analysis is based on version three of *Rescue*.

Part 1: Rescue.

The bright red and pale white storm-wracked clouds of the Gas Giant below the ship swirled and twisted as I rested my trembling hand on the viewport. It took some time before the hammering of my heart stilled, and the clouds below returned to their normal browns, oranges, greys and whites. And it was only when I could breathe again that I realised my predicament.

‘How am I going to get out of this?’

*

I woke confused, surprised and afraid. At first, I simply assumed this was the fussiness that sometimes comes with waking from a deep sleep. Months of canned air can do that to you. But I didn’t remember going to sleep. My confusion deepened as I realised I was no longer onboard the ship.

‘It’s normal,’ a woman said.

Woman? How could that be?

As my senses slowly started to work, I realised I was lying on something that wasn’t my bed. It creaked every time I moved. I sat up, my head fuzzy, and desperately searched the darkened room for answers.

‘Jack,’ she called

I was in a hut of some kind. The only light was a shadowy flickering coming through the doorway. I shivered. Fire on a spaceship was deadly, but then I had to be on a planet. How? But if I was on a planet, then I was safe. A wave of elation swept over me. Luck was with me once again, but immediately, I felt drained, dizziness overwhelmed me, and I fell back on the bed again.

‘It’s alright. It takes a few minutes to recover,’ she said, her warm hand resting on my arm. ‘Jack!’

I couldn't see her features clearly in the shadowy light. Then the little light vanished briefly as someone new entered the hut.

'He's awake,' she said.

*

'It's their food,' the woman said, stressing the word "their". She handed me a small rectangle of what looked like plastic.

It was morning. I'd fallen back to sleep, woke with the sun. I joined them sitting outside, around a small fire, using logs for seats. I kept looking around for walls, there was so much openness., and the open flames ... I was edgy.

'The aliens that kidnapped us,' the man, Jack added.

This Jack's voice was coarse. He was taller than me by a head, and his body beneath the rough checked shirt was solid. His lumpy hands were calloused from labourer's work. On the left side of his face, next to his eye, was some decorative scarring. I'd seen the like on the faces of Galaxy Troopers, that and the tattoos their kind favoured. But that eye of his stared at and into me so that I had to look away. Captain Geen used to look at me that way, but she'd not had his intensity.

These two were like the others, crude worker types. At least they appeared harmless. There was so much hair on the top of their heads, like black or brown fountains. Except Kathleen's was red, radiating where it was caught by the morning sun and tumbling down her back in a fiery cascade. Her body seemed useful, if no other was on offer.

The others, four men, I can't remember their names or much about them, except Eric Witz, a farmer he told me from 'Switzerland'. As if that was supposed to mean something. And as he said, not much happened to him.

‘I’m Kathleen Jainway, from 1967,’ she said. ‘I teach primary school at Wilson’s Promontory in Victoria, that’s Australia. I was hiking alone in the bush when they got me. And this is Jack Foyle, from 1950. He’s a carpenter from Chicago, Illinois. They took him when he was driving home from his ex-wife’s farm where he was building an extension to her house.’

She gave me meaningless details of the others. Tika had been like that, talkative.

‘When are you from?’ she asked. She had an inquisitive gleam in her eyes that improved her attraction. Perhaps she would do.

‘When?’ I asked.

‘What year?’ Jack Foyle asked.

‘Twenty-one thirty-three of the Third Empire.’

Kathleen clapped her hands together.

‘You’re just like in Star Trek,’ she said. ‘You’re from another world. Are you human? Yes, you must be.’

‘Yes,’ I replied. Most ship’s crew were.

‘But you’re not from Earth?’ Jack Foyle asked.

‘Earth? Terra, you mean? Terra was sterilised centuries ago in the Xik war.’

An expression of shock spread across each of their faces. Kathleen was the first to recover.

‘What’s your name?’ she asked, breaking the long silence.

‘Kaida Jaysoog,’ I replied.

‘You’re the longest,’ she said.

‘I don’t understand?’

‘What Kathleen means,’ Jack Foyle said, ‘is there are usually only a few years between us. Kathleen is ’67. I’m ’50. We had a couple of Nazi’s from ’39 and 41.’

For some reason, Jack Foyle spat into the fire.

‘I’m from 1929,’ Eric added.

The other’s mentioned something, but I wasn’t paying attention.

‘Where were you,’ she asked, ‘when you were taken?’

‘I’m the navigator on an interstellar freighter.’

Her eyes lit up. I can’t remember when I’ve seen a woman so tanned.

‘We were all alone when they took us,’ Jack Foyle said. ‘How ...’

‘There were only the three of us. Me, the Captain and the Engineer.’

‘Were there women on your ship?’ Kathleen leant towards me. Her eyes were bright. ‘They had women officers on Star Trek. But they made them wear those short skirts.’

I glanced up into the sky for the first time and stopped.

‘Yeah, aint it a kick in the head,’ Foyle said. ‘The planet’s got rings.’

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It took a few days before I fully understood what they were talking about.

Kathleen’s eyes twinkled as she explained. We’d been kidnapped by “Aliens” and brought to this island on their world. Usually, two at a time. The man who’d come with Jack and the one with Kathleen had died. Once dumped here, they were fed by their captors, then when new people came, the two here the longest were taken away.

‘The Nazis,’ Jack Foyle said. ‘Some tried to get away on a raft’

‘Jack built it. He built the huts too,’ Kathleen said. Glancing at him, she added, ‘It’s nice to have some privacy.’

‘... but they came in one of their ships and killed them. Every one, every time,’ Jack Foyle said. ‘I found an arm washed up on the beach, all chewed up. There are creatures in these waters worse than sharks.’

‘Jack ...’ Kathleen said. There was an earnestness in her voice I didn’t understand.

Jack Foyle nodded.

‘Kathleen has a theory.’

‘It’s out of a book, “Galactic Derelict”,’ she said. ‘About a civilisation that has collapsed. I think that might explain why the food stopped coming, why you ...’ she looked fleetingly at me, ‘... were on your own.’

She was silent as she stared into the flicking fire.

‘Something’s happened,’ she said as if she knew something we didn’t. ““They” used to deliver the food every fourteen days, without fail. The others confirmed it, but we’ve had only one supply, and that was when you arrived. And you were only one person, not the usual two. If it wasn’t for Jack’s fishing skills, we would have starved.’

‘What we thought,’ Jack Foyle said, ‘if that’s the case, then maybe this time if we try a raft, there won’t be any ships, and we can reach land. And then maybe, just maybe, we could find one of their ships.’

‘There might be one that’s abandoned,’ Kathleen added. ‘It might be our chance to get home.’

‘Thing is. None of us knows how to navigate.’ Jack Foyle’s eyes were fixed on me. ‘But you do.’

‘Yes.’

‘If we found a spaceship, could you fly it?’

‘A ship’s a ship,’ I said.

*

Crossing the ocean was a nightmare. I'd been right about the currents, the winds, the birds nesting on land not too far away. But on the raft, we were surrounded by so much monstrous space. With the horizon so far away and the raft heaving up and down with the undulating waves, I could hardly breathe.

But finally, there, in the distance, dark blue against the blue sky, was a long range of teeth like snowy peaks, and at their feet a dark splash of green that could only be a forest. On the strand above the beach, thin limbed trees, with long broad leaves like strange hats, swayed like the skeletal fingers of some misbegotten beast. And in between was the shimmering silver of a city. I would have expected to see ships of some kind flying around the towers like birds. But there was nothing.

We made it to the shore easily enough and with no sign of their ships. Jack Foyle assisted Kathleen off the raft while Eric stumbled about in the shallows behind me. Once on shore, Foyle assumed command and strode off up the glittering sands into the darkness of the jungle, finding what he called an animal track. We followed this in silence till sunset, when we stopped for the night.

Later, after sunset, Jack Foyle left the rough camp to scout around, Eric following him like a pet. I discovered I liked it here. I was safe, amongst the enclosing trees that reminded me of the comforting walls of the freighter, and in the air was the smell of something other than metal and cleaning fluid.

Kathleen was by the fire, shadows dancing on her face and comfortable body as she talked of her past for a while in an amicable way.

'Once I sell my cargo,' I said, coming to sit down beside her, 'I'd like to rent a planet like this. I could live this way for years.' I glanced at her. I'd been wrong. The more I examined her, the more I felt she'd do. 'We could do that, you and I. Find a place just the two of us.'

These “Aliens” had done something to us so that we spoke the same language. Something like a “Universal Translator” from Star Trek Kathleen had said. But sometimes, I thought we didn’t really understand each other that well because Kathleen stood abruptly, left the light of the fire and found something to do in the shadows at the edge of the camp.

After a while, Jack Foyle and Eric returned from their patrol, and Kathleen re-joined us by the fire, sitting close to Foyle.

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We tramped through the forest for the next few days. Then one day, just after we set off after our morning meal, I was surprised to find Jack Foyle walking next to me. I’d have preferred Kathleen, but she liked to keep Eric company when she wasn’t with Jack Foyle.

‘How big are these freighters?’ Jack Foyle asked. ‘As big as a football field?’

I had no what that meant. So instead, I replied, ‘They have a corridor that runs the length of the ship, like a wide road and small transporters to take us from one end to the other. It’s a day’s walk otherwise.’

He was silent for a dozen steps. After we’d climbed over a fallen tree, he asked, ‘And only three crew?’

I know an incredulous voice when I hear one.

‘It’s the law,’ I replied. ‘Captain Geen, besides ordering us around, used to look after the environmental systems, and Tika ...’ the one who thought she was so special, ‘... was an Engineer and was responsible for the drive, the ship’s systems, the shuttle systems, everything else.’

Foyle said nothing for a while, just staring at the overgrown track ahead. His silence, for some reason, made me uncomfortable.

‘And you just navigated the ship?’ he asked. ‘That’s all you did?’

There was something in the way he said that that made me hesitate.

‘No, no,’ I said. ‘I had plenty of tasks. I monitored the ship’s communications, managed loading and unloading and ship’s payments; docking fees, planetary transit charges, and so on.’

‘Administration.’

I didn’t like the way he said that. I don’t know why but I was uncomfortable around Foyle. I would have preferred the woman.

*

Another night, another day. At sunset, I caught a glimpse of silver between the leaves, branches and the tree trunks. Tomorrow we’d be in the city. I tried to talk to Kathleen, as I was tired of Foyle, and Eric meant nothing. Somehow Foyle was always between us, though. Or when he’d gone on his nightly patrol, Kathleen found a reason to go with him.

We didn’t eat the following morning as Kathleen was in a hurry to explore the city. I’d never seen a city like this. The forest grew right up to the edge of a great white plaza that stretched out deep into the city. The ground here was blanketed in leaves, twigs and branches. Here and there, some thin-leaved plants had forced their way through where the surface joined, reaching up to the sun. Looking at the city, there were many towers, all the same, silver, no windows. Silent, still.

‘Galactic Derelict,’ Kathleen said. ‘Just like in the book.’

‘Hopefully, we can find a spaceship to take us home,’ Foyle said. For some reason, Foyle glanced at the woman, and she glanced back. Did she smile?

If Foyle hadn’t found food in the forest, we would have starved. On the twentieth day, just on dusk, we stumbled upon a landing field and a single lonely

shuttle. We rushed to it, wiping the grime off the viewport and stared in at the strange controls. Exhilaration filled me. I could get free of this world, find the freighter, sell the cargo ... Kathleen grabbed Foyle, pressing her lips firmly against his.

That night we made camp inside a building, ate the fruit Foyle foraged.

‘Can you open that ship’s door? Can you fly it?’ Foyle asked, between bites. His back resting against the wall, for once, both eyes in sync, drilling into me.

‘Sure.’

‘You didn’t seem able before. I watched at you. You had no idea.’

‘Of course, I can. I was tired after all the walking today. I’ll work it out. A ship’s a ship.’

I moved away, finding a place to sleep in the shadows. Foyle and Kathleen remained huddled together, whispering.

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Foyle thrust a palm hard against my chest so hard I stumbled and fell to the ground, pain racing through my hands and up my arms from striking the unforgiving surface. Foyle towered over me, his hands forming tight fists, his face red. His right eye glittered with fury. His left eye, cold and unforgiving.

‘I knew you couldn’t,’ he snapped. I shuddered, afraid of what he might do. ‘I knew you lied.’

The ship’s door remained stubbornly locked. I could see, everyone could see, lights flashing inside. The craft was clearly operational.

‘You’re a murderer and a liar!’ Foyle shouted. The iciness in his voice sent a rush of fear through me.

‘No!’ I cried and shuffled away from him like some strange inverted beast.

‘I’ve seen the way you look at Kathleen,’ Foyle growled. ‘I heard the way you talked about the women on your ship. I was the same when my father beat my mother. I was it in North Africa with Patton when I got this,’ he pointed to his left eye, ‘saving a nurse from my “buddy”. They let him go, shipped me home, gave me a medal and kicked me out. But then I became a cop and then a detective. A good one. And I know when I’m being lied to. I know a killer when I meet one. You told us you were a navigator, but you said to Kathleen you were going to sell the ship’s freight. How could you, it wasn’t yours to sell? So easy, you’d killed the crew, the women.’

‘That’s a lie,’ I cried. ‘It’s you. You’re doing this because you want Kathleen.’

‘And the way you talked about them, in the past. Because you knew they were dead,’ Foyle kept on, his left eye boring into me. ‘That’s how the aliens could take you. You were alone. But if they hadn’t, you’d have been trapped there because you don’t know anything about spaceships except how to navigate.’

‘That’s not true. I mean none of it,’ I squealed. He knew! I could feel his hands squeezing my throat.

‘You only talked to people, paid bills, but you don’t know how to work a spaceship.’

Foyle raised his clenched fists. I saw the storm raging inside him. He stepped closer. I screamed and shuffled awkwardly backwards.

‘Jacky,’ Kathleen said. She was at Foyle’s side, her fingers caressing his cheek, ‘Don’t do this. Her death was an accident.’

‘I killed her ... I’m just like him.’

‘An accident, Jacky. A terrible, terrible accident, that’s all. You’re not like your father or like him. He’s not worth it. Please, Jacky, don’t hurt him, for me.’

As I watched him, terrified, I saw Foyle change. The anger abated, his fists unclenched. He managed a weak smile as he searched her face.

‘You’re right, you’re always right,’ he said.

Kathleen turned and stared down at me. A whimper escaped my lips. I’d never seen such coldness before.

‘It’s not for us to judge you. This planet will take care of that,’ she said. ‘Jacky, Eric, there’s nothing for us here. We’re leaving. If you follow us’

She placed a hand on the thick muscle of Foyle’s arm.

They walked away, leaving me where I was. Alone

Part 2: Rescue - Analysis

The bright red and pale white storm-wracked clouds of the Gas Giant below the ship swirled and twisted as I rested my trembling hand on the viewport. It took some time before the hammering of my heart stilled, and the clouds below returned to their normal browns, oranges, greys and whites. And it was only when I could breathe again that I realised my predicament.

‘How am I going to get out of this?’

The introduction to the story is quite busy. The mention of the gas giant and the viewport inform the reader the setting is Science Fiction (SF) and probably set in the future. Note, though, while this story has an SF setting, it is not SF. We also quickly learn this is a first-person narrative.

The trembling hand implies the narrator, a male by the name of Kaida Jaysoog, as we learn, has done something terrible, possibly violent. The ‘How am I going to get out of this?’ speaks to Kaida’s character; he’s done something rash. Kaida is clearly not a deep thinker and has, due to his own actions, placed himself in a potentially life-threatening position that he has no idea how to extract himself from.

But we’re not finished with this scene yet. Kaida refers to the gas giant’s clouds as ‘bright red’ and ‘pale white’. Typically, as least from what we know, the clouds of gas giants can be many different colours. You need to remember that this story is first person, so we see these clouds through his eyes. Kaida’s in a deep emotional state, so what he sees is coloured by those emotions. The red represents fresh blood, the pale white, a body when the blood has drained to its lowest level.

As Kaida clams down, he starts to see the clouds covering the gas giant in their true colours.

*

I woke confused, surprised and afraid. At first, I simply assumed this was the fussiness that sometimes comes with waking from a deep sleep. Months of canned air can do that to you. But I didn't remember going to sleep. My confusion deepened as I realised, I was no longer onboard the ship.

'It's normal,' a woman said.

Woman? How could that be?

As my senses slowly started to work, I realised I was lying on something that wasn't my bed. It creaked every time I moved. I sat up, my head fuzzy, and desperately searched the darkened room for answers.

'Jack,' she called

I was in a hut of some kind. The only light was a shadowy flickering coming through the doorway. I shivered. Fire on a spaceship was deadly, but then I had to be on a planet. How? But if I was on a planet, then I was safe. A wave of elation swept over me. Luck was with me once again, but immediately, I felt drained, dizziness overwhelmed me, and I fell back on the bed again.

'It's ok. It takes a few minutes to recover,' she said, her warm hand resting on my arm. 'Jack!'

I couldn't see her features clearly in the shadowy light. Then the little light vanished briefly as someone new entered the hut.

'He's awake,' she said.

This passage's function is to set the scene, express Kaida's confusion at suddenly waking up on a planet and his surprising joy at being safe and sound. Kathleen Jainway is introduced, and that connection that comes from a shared experience is being developed.

At this stage, Kaida is a blank page for Kathleen, and she assumes, reasonably, that the Kaida is simply the next in a long line of abductees and the same as the others on the island.

However, there are two things to note: Kaida's comment about the fire and spaceships. This reinforces that the Kaida is from the future and part of the defamiliarisation that I'll expand on later. And the other is the wave of elation that sweeps through Kaida and his mentioning that luck has saved him again. This elation lines up with his spoken comment in the opening passage. The luck part being with him implies he's done things in the past, probably reprehensible, even illegal acts and that luck, rather than good planning, got him out of.

This is another example of character development. Kaida is not a deep thinker, driven more by emotions than reason.

One more point. As Kaida awakes, he's still confused about where he is, so his thought *Woman. How could that be?* is a reference to the first passage right at the start of the story and an insight into what he has done.

*

'It's their food,' the woman said, stressing the word "their". She handed me a small rectangle of what looked like plastic.

It was morning. I'd fallen back to sleep, woke with the sun. I joined them sitting outside, around a small fire, using logs for seats. I kept looking around for walls, there was so much openness., and the open flames ... I was edgy.

'The aliens that kidnapped us,' the man, Jack added.

Here we establish the characters' situation; they've been abducted by Aliens. This was a common trope in SF movies of the '70s, '80s and '90s (see 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' and 'Fire in the Sky').

The defamiliarisation started earlier is continued, the Kaida's 'looking for walls, and the open flames' showing for the first time the effect of this displacement on the Kaida. He would spend most of his life onboard a spaceship, and so the absence of the familiar is disturbing to him. We know the catastrophic effect of fire on a spaceship from the deaths of the Apollo 1 astronauts in 1967.

For those not familiar with the term, 'defamiliarisation' is the taking of something we are all familiar with, open spaces, the wide sea and changing it in some way, so that we see these things anew, from a different perspective.

In the case of Kaida, he spends too much time in space, so that open spaces are terrifying for him. Of course, we might ask why he spends so much time in space? Is there a reason?

This Jack's voice was coarse. He was taller than me by a head, and his body beneath the rough checked shirt was solid. His lumpy hands were calloused from labourer's work. On the left side of his face, next to his eye, was some decorative scarring. I'd seen the like on the faces of Galaxy Troopers, that and the tattoos their

kind favoured. But that eye of his stared at and into me so that I had to look away.

Captain Geen used to look at me that way, but she'd not had his intensity.

This paragraph is doing a lot of work. First, it introduces us to Jack Foyle and Kaida's attitude to him, describing Jack as pretty much a worker type.

While Kaida notices the scarring around Jack's left eye, he doesn't understand that it's only a false eye. Kaida is from Jack's future, where replacement eyes could expect to be either organic or robotic. This in the way he refers to the eye and the way it stares at him, and the scarring and the mention of the Galaxy Troopers. This was added to give a little detail about the universe Kaida comes from and something about Kaida's character. Notice how Kaida groups Foyle with 'Their kind.' And finally to further develop Jack's backstory

The last sentence suggests that Kaida's captain is a strong woman and that she might be onto the Kaida - becoming aware of his real character, his potential for violence. By referring to her in the past tense, which he will do again later, he is hinting that something has happened to her unconsciously.

These two were like the others, crude worker types. At least they appeared harmless. There was so much hair on the top of their heads, like black or brown fountains. Except Kathleen's was red, radiating where it was caught by the morning sun and tumbling down her back in a fiery cascade. Her body seemed useful, if no other was on offer.

The others, four men, I can't remember their names or much about them, except Eric Witź, a farmer he told me from 'Switzerland'. As if that was supposed to mean something. And as he said, not much happened to him.

We start this section building on the narrator's attitude to these people, revealing more of his character.

The defamiliarisation is continued with the narrator's reaction to the amount of hair on the other's heads. Given the time span between the other's and the narrator of possibly tens of thousands of years, you would expect there to be some difference between the look of the other's, people from 20th Century earth and the narrator of the Third Empire, even if it's just the fashion trend of to go around hairless. This reaction on the part of Kaida implies his own hairless appearance.

Kaida's interest in Kathleen starts to grow. He likes her red hair. The sentence, 'Her body seemed useful ...' is there to make the reader feel uncomfortable. If the reader hasn't already formed a negative view of Kaida, this should start building doubt.

In the last paragraph, we return to the narrator's attitude to his fellow kidnappees.

Note the mention of Eric Witź and his statement that nothing much happened to him. Remember that.

'I'm Kathleen Jainway, from 1967,' she said. 'I teach primary school at Wilson's Promontory in Victoria, that's Australia. I was hiking alone in the bush when they got me. And this is Jack Foyle, from 1950. He's a carpenter from Chicago, Illinois. They took him when he was driving home from his ex-wife's farm where he was building an extension to her house.'

Here we learn something of Kathleen Jainway. The surname 'Jainway' is an intertextual reference to the captain of the starship Voyager from the TV series of the same name. For those who know the TV series, this use of the character's surname does some of the heavy lifting of establishing this character. For those who don't know the show, there's still plenty here for you to chew on.

As she says, Kathleen is an Australian teacher from 1967, close enough to the 'Good old days' when a female teacher had to resign her job if she got married. And despite this being the 'Swinging '60s, she is aware of the many constraints still placed on women – more on this later.

An important point is that when Kathleen was taken, she was hiking alone in the bush. This speaks to her character, her need for independence. She's not afraid to go into the wild alone, without a man.

Kathleen is the one who tells not only her story but Jack's as well. Jack is from the 1950s and would normally take command. But here Kathleen, not only displays her need to be treated as an equal but points to their deeper relationship.

Something to remember is that Kathleen mentions in Jack's story is that he was driving home from his ex-wife's house where he was doing some construction work – building an extension. This is an important element in Jack's story, a piece of the picture of Jack's past. Thinks about it for a moment. Something caused his marriage to fail yet he and his ex-wife are on good terms, enough so that he would spend some considerable time building this extension. This doesn't happen overnight. So, what caused his marriage to fail? Was it something that happened to Foyle, or maybe something that happened to him? This will be referenced again at the end of the story.

Lastly, Jack's last name, 'Foyle', is the name of a fictional English detective, see 'Foyle's War'. This speaks to Jack's past as a police detective, albeit one from Chicago, and the name sounds the same as 'Foil' when spoken, which is what Foyle does to the Kaida's hopes of escape and a future with Kathleen.

She gave me meaningless details of the others. Tika had been like that, talkative.

Two important points here: the narrator's character is being developed further, shown by his lack of interest in the details Kathleen gives and gives the first hint of the narrator's attitude to his own crewmates. When referring to Tika, the use of the past tense implies she may be dead.

'When are you from?' she asked. She had an inquisitive gleam in her eyes that improved her attraction. Perhaps she would do.

'When?' I asked.

'What year?' Jack Foyle asked.

'Twenty-one thirty-three of the Third Empire.'

Kathleen clapped her hands together.

'You're just like in Star Trek,' she said. 'You're from another world. Are you human? Yes, you must be.'

'Yes,' I replied. Most ship's crew were.

'But you're not from Earth?' Jack Foyle asked.

'Earth? Terra, you mean? Terra was sterilised centuries ago in the Xik war.'

An expression of shock spread across each of their faces. Kathleen was the first to recover.

‘What’s your name?’ she asked, breaking the long silence.

‘Kaida Jaysoog,’ I replied.

‘You’re the longest,’ she said.

‘I don’t understand?’

‘What Kathleen means,’ Jack Foyle said, ‘is there are usually only a few years between us. Kathleen is ’67. I’m ’50. We had a couple of Nazi’s from ’39 and 41.’

For some reason, Jack Foyle spat into the fire.

‘I’m from 1929,’ Eric added.

The other’s mentioned something, but I wasn’t paying attention.

‘Where were you,’ she asked, ‘when you were taken?’

‘I’m the navigator on an interstellar freighter.’

Her eyes lit up. I can’t remember when I’ve seen a woman so tanned.

‘We were all alone when they took us,’ Jack Foyle said. ‘How ...’

‘There were only the three of us. Me, the Captain and the Engineer.’

‘Were there women on your ship?’ Kathleen leant towards me. Her eyes were bright. ‘They had women officers on Star Trek. But they made them wear those short skirts.’

I glanced up into the sky for the first time and stopped.

‘Yeah, aint it a kick in the head,’ Foyle said. ‘The planet’s got rings.’

This section continues to build the front story and Kaida’s growing interest in Kathleen.

The year Kaida comes from, 2033, has no meaning. It simply rolls off the tongue nicely. However, combined with the reference to the ‘Third Empire’, it adds to the SF feel

of the story and informs the reader that Kaida is from thousands of years in the other kidnappee's future.

Kathleen's references to Star Trek (the tv series was often referred to as 'A wagon train to the stars') is important and helps us understand Kathleen a little more. One of the key elements of Star Trek was that it is based around an egalitarian society where women are treated as equals. Something important to her. We will return to this later.

The mention of the Xik war both adds to the SF feel and is there for a bit of fun. In addition, it's an intertextual reference to the novel 'Beast Master', by Andre Norton.

Jack's spitting into the fire, meaningless to Kaida, highlights the differences between his and Jack's, and the other's, societies. As we learn later, Jack fought in World War II.

Once again, we see Kaida's attitude where he observes, 'The other's mentioned something, but I wasn't paying attention.'

When Kathleen asks Kaida where he was taken, he avoids the question, answering that he was a navigator on an interstellar freighter. Foyle, having been a police detective, as we learn at the end of the story, picks up on this. He recognises that Kaida is being vague about where he was, something he knows from experience, criminals do. This interchange prompts Jack's later questions of Kaida.

When Kathleen mentions there were women officers on Star Trek, we see again her desire for equality, to be able to lead her life the way she wants. She looks at Star Trek as a promise of the future. A future she thinks Kaida is from. However, she reveals she's no dewy-eyed dreamer. Her comment, '*But they made them wear those shorty skirts,*' shows that she's aware Star Trek is just a TV show and that the future could be male-dominated. Once more, we are revealing her character.

The last two sentences reinforce the SF aspect of the story. Also, to place Jack firmly in the 1950s as his phrase was common about then.

*

It took a few days before I fully understood what they were talking about. Kathleen's eyes twinkled as she explained. We'd been kidnapped by "Aliens" and brought to this island on their world. Usually, two at a time. The man who'd come with Jack and the one with Kathleen had died. Once dumped here, they were fed by their captors, then when new people came, the two here the longest were taken away.

'The Nazis,' Jack Foyle said. 'Some tried to get away on a raft ...'

'Jack built it. He built the huts too,' Kathleen said. Glancing at him, she added, 'It's nice to have some privacy.'

'... but they came in one of their ships and killed them. Every one, every time,' Jack Foyle said. 'I found an arm washed up on the beach, all chewed up. There are creatures in these waters worse than sharks.'

'Jack ...' Kathleen said. There was an earnestness in her voice I didn't understand.

Jack Foyle nodded.

'Kathleen has a theory.'

'It's out of a book, "Galactic Derelict",' she said. 'About a civilisation that has collapsed. I think that might explain why the food stopped coming, why you ...' she looked fleetingly at me, '... were on your own.'

She was silent as she stared into the flicking fire.

'Something's happened,' she said as if she knew something we didn't. "'They" used to deliver the food every fourteen days, without fail. The others confirmed it, but

we've had only one supply, and that was when you arrived. And you were only one person, not the usual two. If it wasn't for Jack's fishing skills, we would have starved.'

'What we thought,' Jack Foyle said, 'if that's the case, then maybe this time if we try a raft, there won't be any ships, and we can reach land. And then maybe, just maybe, we could find one of their ships.'

'There might be one that's abandoned,' Kathleen added. 'It might be our chance to get home.'

'Thing is. None of us knows how to navigate.' Jack Foyle's eyes were fixed on me. 'But you do.'

'Yes.'

'If we found a spaceship, could you fly it?'

'A ship's a ship,' I said.

*

What's happening here is we're building the back story and setting the direction – the escape from the island. We have come to understand a little of what the aliens were doing with their captives and how things were, the pattern of delivery of new captives and food, taking the captives who'd been on the island the longest.

But then we learn that this system is failing. Delivery of captives and supply of food has become irregular. Kathleen has a theory: The alien civilisation has either collapsed or is in the process of doing so. This opens up the opportunity for escape. Due to their lack of experience, Kathleen, Jack and Eric have no idea how to get back to their own time. They are trusting Kaida and his expertise.

The name 'Galactic Derelict' is an intertextual reference to a novel based around a collapsed, space-going civilisation. While it is not necessary to have read the book, it does give depth to this story.

Note the interchange between Kathleen and Jack:

'Jack ...' Kathleen said.

Jack Foyle nodded.

'Kathleen has a theory.'

This interchange tells us a little more about the relationship between Kathleen and Jack. Kathleen is comfortable enough with Jack to explore what, even to her, might appear outlandish theories. Jack supports her.

Now, returning to Kathleen's comment, 'Jack built it. He built the huts too.' The first sentence refers to the earlier raft that was destroyed by the aliens. This is a comparison between the handyman, Jack, and Kaida, whose only useful skill is navigation. We'll see more of this as the story unfolds.

Before moving on, the second sentence, and the rest of the dialogue, implies the intimacy between Kathleen and Jack is possibly a sexual one.

Closing the section, when asked if he can fly a spaceship, Kaida lies. This lie will become apparent later.

A couple of things to note that bare on this section. In our world, there was, and seems still to be, a belief that future generations will solve all our problems, fix all our mistakes. A complementary belief is that we of the modern world are smarter and more civilised than the people of the past.

Crossing the ocean was a nightmare. I'd been right about the currents, the winds, the birds nesting on land not too far away. But on the raft, we were surrounded by so much monstrous space. With the horizon so far away and the raft heaving up and down with the undulating waves, I could hardly breathe.

But finally, there, in the distance, dark blue against the blue sky, was a long range of teeth like snowy peaks, and at their feet a dark splash of green that could only be a forest. On the strand above the beach, thin limbed trees, with long broad leaves like strange hats, swayed like the skeletal fingers of some misbegotten beast. And in between was the shimmering silver of a city. I would have expected to see ships of some kind flying around the towers like birds. But there was nothing.

This section begins with a little more defamiliarisation. Something you would expect coming from an island where Kaida would have started to feel, if not at home, at least more comfortable, to sailing on the wide-open sea. This would be a dramatic change for him. Not only that, there would be little by the way of safety or security to be found on the few pieces of rough timber that were the raft. Fear of sudden death from the sky, no safety in the water from the alien sea life. Indeed, this would be a nightmare.

Once Kaida is surrounded by the enclosing walls of the forest, he starts to feel more confident. We'll signs of this in the next section.

There is one last piece of defamiliarisation. Kaida's description of the trees along the shoreline. He's still under the influence of travelling on the open ocean and is viewing the forest from an emotional state.

The rest of the section involves scene-setting and story development. As mentioned, Kaida's only talent is navigation. This is another comparison with Jack. There will be more later.

We made it to the shore easily enough and with no sign of their ships. Jack Foyle assisted Kathleen off the raft while Eric stumbled about in the shallows behind me. Once on shore, Foyle assumed command and strode off up the glittering sands into the darkness of the jungle, finding what he called an animal track. We followed this in silence till sunset, when we stopped for the night.

Later, after sunset, Jack Foyle left the rough camp to scout around, Eric following him like a pet. I discovered I liked it here. I was safe, amongst the enclosing trees that reminded me of the comforting walls of the freighter, and in the air was the smell of something other than metal and cleaning fluid.

Once more, we see a comparison between Jack and the Kaida. Jack assists Kathleen out of the water, while Kaida abandon's Eric to stumble around in the shallows, showing no interest in Eric's health or wellbeing. Also, Jack helping the independent Kathleen, and her allowing it, hints once more at their relationship.

Jack takes the lead, revealing a little more about his character, while Kathleen, an experienced hike (she was taken while hiking alone, remember in the Australian Bush) allows him without comment. She knows, even if at this stage we do not, that Jack was a soldier and probably the best one to tackle the unknown ahead of them. She also understands that coming from the '40s and '50s as he does, Jack needs to take the lead sometimes. This gives the reader another insight into Kathleen's character. She has

feelings for him and knows she has to balance their relationship. She also knows his secrets, as will be revealed later.

In the last paragraph, we again see Kaida's contempt for Eric and also that he is adapting to this world. The enclosing forest is like the walls of his spaceship; he's feeling safe after the terrors of the open ocean. He's also starting to enjoy the change in smells as well. This sense of safety prompts him to make a move on Kathleen.

Kathleen was by the fire, shadows dancing on her face and comfortable body as she talked of her past for a while in an amicable way.

'Once I sell my cargo,' I said, coming to sit down beside her, 'I'd like to rent a planet like this. I could live this way for years.' I glanced at her. I'd been wrong. The more I examined her, the more I felt she'd do. 'We could do that, you and I. Find a place just the two of us.'

These "Aliens" had done something to us so that we spoke the same language. Something like a "Universal Translator" from Star Trek Kathleen had said. But sometimes, I thought we didn't really understand each other that well because Kathleen stood abruptly, left the light of the fire and found something to do in the shadows at the edge of the camp.

After a while, Jack Foyle and Eric returned from their patrol, and Kathleen re-joined us by the fire, sitting close to Foyle.

In the first sentence, the reader comes to see that Kaida has come to the conclusion that Kathleen is attractive enough for him to make a move on her. Note Kaida's reference to Kathleen's 'Comfortable' body. This reveals a little more of Kaida's character. The word 'Comfortable' is hardly romantic and speaks more about Kaida's

wants and needs than Kathleen's. The question arises, does he even see her as a human? Certainly, he doesn't view her as an equal. He seems to think he can manipulate her, just like an object or a pet.

As a technique to attract Kathleen, Kaida boasts he'd like to rent a planet like this, once he sells the cargo on the freighter. It's a clumsy attempt as Kathleen, probably having experienced his type before, to move away from him. Considering her closeness with Jack, it's reasonable to assume she will comment to Jack about this selling of cargo. Another clue for Jack to work on.

The next paragraph has two functions. The first is to explain how they can understand each other despite thousands of years separating Kaida from the others. This issue pops up in many space-based SF stories and is commented on if not handled well. The solution here is that the 'Aliens' did *something* to their captives for their own reasons. It has the other advantage that it maintains the SF feel.

The second function further reveals Kaida's blunt senses. He doesn't understand why Kathleen moves away from him, and, even after she goes and sits next to Jack after his return, that the two are in a relationship.

*

We tramped through the forest for the next few days. Then one day, just after we set off after our morning meal, I was surprised to find Jack Foyle walking next to me. I'd have preferred Kathleen, but she liked to keep Eric company when she wasn't with Jack Foyle.

'How big are these freighters?' Jack Foyle asked. 'As big as a football field?'

I had no what that meant. So instead, I replied, ‘They have a corridor that runs the length of the ship, like a wide road and small transporters to take us from one end to the other. It’s a day’s walk otherwise.’

He was silent for a dozen steps. After we’d climbed over a fallen tree, he asked, ‘And only three crew?’

I know an incredulous voice when I hear one.

‘It’s the law,’ I replied. ‘Captain Geen, besides ordering us around, used to look after the environmental systems, and Tika ...’ the one who thought she was so special, ‘... was an Engineer and was responsible for the drive, the ship’s systems, the shuttle systems, everything else.’

Foyle said nothing for a while, just staring at the overgrown track ahead. His silence, for some reason, made me uncomfortable.

‘And you just navigated the ship?’ he asked. ‘That’s all you did?’

There was something in the way he said that that made me hesitate.

‘No, no,’ I said. ‘I had plenty of tasks. I monitored the ship’s communications, managed loading and unloading and ship’s payments; docking fees, planetary transit charges, and so on.’

‘Administration.’

I didn’t like the way he said that. I don’t know why but I was uncomfortable around Foyle. I would have preferred the woman.

This is an important scene. Jack isn’t just asking Kaida questions out of interest to make conversation. Jack is interrogating Kiada. Their being together at this point was no accident. It can be assumed that Kathleen has spoken to Jack about Kaida’s boast, how it

is the same trick other men have used to get her into bed. Jack was already suspicious of Kaida.

Kathleen's change in attitude to Kaida is shown by her preference to be with Eric, when Jack isn't available, rather than be with him. Eric's character has not been fleshed out – though this is a subtle hint.

Notice up to this point, Kaida refers to Jack as 'Jack Foyle', but after this conversation, he refers to him only as 'Foyle', showing that, as yet, he has no reason to fear Jack. He's also not comfortable around him. His opinion of Jack is starting to change.

Jack starts the conversation by asking questions that shows he's trying to understand how a 'freighter' can operate with only three crew. Given Jack's background, he'd be visualising something familiar – a typical ocean-going ship, perhaps the one that took him to Africa in the war. He's not into SF, and Star Trek was, for him, still years away.

Of course, Kaida couldn't be expected to know what a sports field is. Even if they existed in his time, they could be of any shape or size, or even just virtual. So, he responds with an explanation he thinks Jack will understand.

Jack is understandably incredulous. While there were computers in the 1950s, these were still relatively primitive, expensive and rare out in the wild. He'd have no experience of them.

Just a note here. Already in the near future, 2021, there are plans for crewless cargo ships to plough the seas between the US and Europe and even some small experimental 'drone' research vessels.

Kaida's response, 'It's the law,' is really important. It tells us that, in fact, there could be even less crew, though not none at all. More on this later.

In the next part of Kaida's dialogue, he mentions the other crew are women and that their work is technical, but, as we learn, Kaida's is not. Also, and this is important, when Kaida speaks of them, it is in the past tense. As Kaida has no reason to believe he's been transported to the past, rather it's a natural assumption on his part that he's in his own present, it would be normal to speak of his crewmates in the present tense. Unless he knew they were dead.

As Jack was a detective, as we learn, he noticed this. Not an uncommon trait for a murderer. It also reveals Kaida's attitude to Tika, the engineer.

In the following section, Foyle puts this all together, then slips up, revealing his thoughts when he says, 'And you just navigated the ship.'

Kaida picks up on this and attempts to make himself appear more important.

When Jack says, 'Administration', it reveals he's not convinced. He understands what 'It's the law' means. It applies to Kaida, and that's the only reason he's onboard the ship. His other tasks are little more than busywork. Jack understands the power relationship between the three crew. Kaida displays his discomfort in the last paragraph, though he hasn't yet realised the danger he's in.

*

Another night, another day. At sunset, I caught a glimpse of silver between the leaves, branches and the tree trunks. Tomorrow we'd be in the city. I tried to talk to Kathleen, as I was tired of Foyle, and Eric meant nothing. Somehow Foyle was always between us, though. Or when he'd gone on his nightly patrol, Kathleen found a reason to go with him.

We didn't eat the following morning as Kathleen was in a hurry to explore the city. I'd never seen a city like this. The forest grew right up to the edge of a great white plaza that stretched out deep into the city. The ground here was blanketed in leaves, twigs and branches. Here and there, some thin-leaved plants had forced their way through where the surface joined, reaching up to the sun. Looking at the city, there were many towers, all the same, silver, no windows. Silent, still.

'Galactic Derelict,' Kathleen said. 'Just like in the book.'

'Hopefully, we can find a spaceship to take us home,' Foyle said. For some reason, Foyle glanced at the woman, and she glanced back. Did she smile?

If Foyle hadn't found food in the forest, we would have starved. On the twentieth day, just on dusk, we stumbled upon a landing field and a single lonely shuttle. We rushed to it, wiping the grime off the viewport and stared in at the strange controls. Exhilaration filled me. I could get free of this world, find the freighter, sell the cargo ... Kathleen grabbed Foyle, pressing her lips firmly against his.

That night we made camp inside a building, ate the fruit Foyle foraged.

'Can you open that ship's door? Can you fly it?' Foyle asked, between bites. His back resting against the wall, for once, both eyes in sync, drilling into me.

'Sure.'

'You didn't seem able before. I watched at you. You had no idea.'

'Of course, I can. I was tired after all the walking today. I'll work it out. A ship's a ship.'

I moved away, finding a place to sleep in the shadows. Foyle and Kathleen remained huddled together, whispering.

Now the story is starting to pick up pace. There is a game going on where Foyle ensures Kathleen is never alone with Kaida. Jack would have spoken with Kathleen about his suspicions. She already knows that Jack was a cop, and a good one, and believes him. At the moment, though, they still carry the hope that Kaida can pilot the alien ship and get them home.

The first sentence of the next paragraph reveals Kathleen's growing dominance. The rest is scene-setting – hinting that the group is near the end of their journey.

The intertextual reference to the novel *Galactic Derelict* helps build images of what an advanced space going civilisation that has collapsed might look like.

Jack's 'Hopefully, we can find a spaceship to take us home' shows that he's starting to think that even if Kaida can fly an alien spaceship, and he's beginning to doubt that he can, that there's no way back to his time. But it's more than that. The glance at Kathleen tells us this statement is, in fact, a proposal. He wants to be with her. Kaida notices the look Jack gives her and the one she returns, but once more, his blunt senses don't reveal to him what's going on between them. This is important because, just as Kaida notices the look Jack gives Kathleen, Jack has previously noticed the hungry glances Kaida gives her as well.

Foyle's finding food, i.e., the group's dependency on him to survive, is another comparison with Kaida.

They find a ship, and the first thing Kathleen does is kiss Jack. This is the answer to the question he raised when he said, 'Hopefully, we can find a spaceship ...' and cements their relationship. Kathleen is saying 'Yes.'

Kaida continues his delusion that he can become wealthy off the sale of the cargo from the freighter. He says that he'll be 'free of this world.' This is the first sign he hasn't

had a chance with Kathleen, not with Jack around. Note that Kaida refers to Kathleen as 'The woman' now.

Jack reveals his suspicions when he asks Kaida if he can open the spaceship's door. He knows that Kaida can't open it, and even if he could, he probably couldn't fly it and is certain now Kaida is a murderer.

Kaida does what he always does, delays and puts his trust in luck.

In the last paragraph, Kaida hides in the shadows, a metaphor for who he is; someone who hides his true nature.

The last sentence is where Jack tells Kathleen all his certainties.

*

Foyle thrust a palm hard against my chest so hard I stumbled and fell to the ground, pain racing through my hands and up my arms from striking the unforgiving surface. Foyle towered over me, his hands forming tight fists, his face red. His right eye glittered with fury. His left eye, cold and unforgiving.

'I knew you couldn't,' he snapped. I shuddered, afraid of what he might do. 'I knew you lied.'

The ship's door remained stubbornly locked. I could see, everyone could see, lights flashing inside. The craft was clearly operational.

'You're a murderer and a liar!' Foyle shouted. The iciness in his voice sent a rush of fear through me.

'No!' I cried and shuffled away from him like some strange inverted beast.

'I've seen the way you look at Kathleen,' Foyle growled. 'I heard the way you talked about the women on your ship. I was the same when my father beat my mother. I was it in North Africa with Patton when I got this,' he pointed to his left eye, 'saving

a nurse from my “buddy”. They let him go, shipped me home, gave me a medal and kicked me out. But then I became a cop and then a detective. A good one. And I know when I’m being lied to. I know a killer when I meet one. You told us you were a navigator, but you said to Kathleen you were going to sell the ship’s freight. How could you, it wasn’t yours to sell? So easy, you’d killed the crew, the women.’

‘That’s a lie,’ I cried. ‘It’s you. You’re doing this because you want Kathleen.’

‘And the way you talked about them, in the past. Because you knew they were dead,’ Foyle kept on, his left eye boring into me. ‘That’s how the aliens could take you. You were alone. But if they hadn’t, you’d have been trapped there because you don’t know anything about spaceships except how to navigate.’

‘That’s not true. I mean none of it,’ I squealed. He knew! I could feel his hands squeezing my throat.

‘You only talked to people, paid bills, but you don’t know how to work a spaceship.’

Foyle raised his clenched fists. I saw the storm raging inside him. He stepped closer. I screamed and shuffled awkwardly backwards.

‘Jacky,’ Kathleen said. She was at Foyle’s side, her fingers caressing his cheek, ‘Don’t do this. Her death was an accident.’

‘I killed her ... I’m just like him.’

‘An accident, Jacky. A terrible, terrible accident, that’s all. You’re not like your father or like him. He’s not worth it. Please, Jacky, don’t hurt him, for me.’

As I watched him, terrified, I saw Foyle change. The anger abated, his fists unclenched. He managed a weak smile as he searched her face.

‘You’re right, you’re always right,’ he said.

Kathleen turned and stared down at me. A whimper escaped my lips. I'd never seen such coldness before.

'It's not for us to judge you. This planet will take care of that,' she said. 'Jacky, Eric, there's nothing for us here. We're leaving. If you follow us'

She placed a hand on the thick muscle of Foyle's arm.

They walked away, leaving me where I was. Alone.

We're on the last stretch and almost home. A lot is happening here, a lot of information coming out. This is where the groundwork laid out in the various parts of the story comes together.

First off, this section was structured this way, with Jack suddenly attacking Kaida for maximum effect. The previous section ended on a quiet though tension-filled, note. The mention of shadows and whispers, then the reader is presented with violence. This is intended to shock the reader, just as Kaida would be shocked.

It is finally revealed that Kaida can't operate the alien spaceship. He can't even open the door. The group is trapped on the planet, amongst the ruins of the alien civilisation, tormented by technology they don't understand. Freedom has evaporated; there is no way home.

As we know Jack long suspected Kaida was a murder but hoped, despite what he'd learnt of Kaida and the type of non-technical work he did, that Kaida could fly a spaceship and get them home.

When it is revealed Kaida can't pilot the ship, Jack attacks him, but Kathleen steps in and stops the raging ex-cop. She decides they will abandon Kaida and threatens

violence from Jack if he follows them. Kaida is back where he started at the beginning of the story, alone.

But we're not finished yet. There is one more piece of the puzzle that needs to be put in place, and this concerns Jack. This is deep so stay with me. If you think about it, Jack's attack on Kaida was a little over the top. It's revealed that Jack thinks he's the same as Kaida, for some reason based around the accidental death of a woman that Jack is blames himself for. That much is either said or implied in the text, and it shows that Jack can be impetuous, acting without thinking. Could we speculate that was how he came to lose his eye? Acting to protect a nurse but not thinking through the best way to do it? Surely there were other ways he could have protected her that did not lead to the violence that lost him his eye.

We know Jack is protective of women, was a police detective but is now a carpenter –a profession about as far away from being a detective as you can get – is on good terms with his ex-wife and blames himself for the accidental death of a woman. While we can't know exactly how this woman came to die, we can speculate that while carrying out his duties as a policeman and detective in attempting to capture a felon, he shot and killed an innocent woman.

There we have it. I hope you enjoyed this exploration of *Rescue*. I plan to do some more of these in the future, so keep an eye out on my website, www.glennkershaw.com.

Oh, before I go. Eric. What's his function? Eric is there to prove that writers have a sense of humour. Eric has no purpose. As he says at the beginning of the story, 'Nothing happens to me.' I only added him for a bit of fun.