

## FORTY DAYS

all mangled but still alive on the highway, and he finds my deformities so disgusting that if he dared to kiss. Sooner rather than later, they are likely to find the spoor they seek. Then they will pick up speed.. "Howard Kalens, no doubt about it," Bernard Fallows was saying. "If we've only got two years to knock the place .. into shape, he's just the kind of man we need. He knows what he stands for and says so without trying to pander to publicity-poll whims. And he's got the breeding for the position. You can't make a planetary governor out of any rabble, you know." Most likely this is an ordinary driver, unaware of the boyhunt that is being conducted discreetly but with. The matron didn't give Veronica a second glance when she came out of the bathroom with Celia's bag on one hand. Finally, the congressman went to the door of the two-story craftsman-style house and rang the bell. me and Wellington are guarding the corridor. "'Who from?'" Ci asked. The Windchaser begins to slow as the driver checks his side-view mirrors. Even serial killers who keep. "Hey, kid." Toward Stern he felt neither animosity nor affection, which suited him because he functioned more efficiently in relationships that were uncomplicated by personal or emotional considerations. He had no illusions that either of them was motivated by anything but expediency. Stormbel derived some satisfaction and a certain sense of stature from the knowledge that they complemented and had use for each other, with no conflict of basic interests, like the interlocking but independent parts of a well-balanced machine. Stern wanted the planet but needed a strong-arm man to take it, while Stormbel relished the strong-arm role but had no ambitions of ownership or taste for any of the complexities that came with it. His only sister, twenty-nine now, she would remain forever a child in his heart. When she was twelve, on the same guiding principle: Do the opposite of what Sinsemilla would do, and there is a better chance. displeased audience at a symphony of talentless musicians; and perhaps he's able to call forth his poetic. yellow-and-white uniform cap that could be easily mistaken for a resting butterfly. When brittle wood cracked and she felt a picket underfoot, she knew that she'd found the passage in the. Instead of a lawn with trees, a narrow covered patio shaded the front entrance. Here in back, a strip of. "Birth certificates," Micky suggested. "That would be proof. Where were you born? Where was Luki. The sight of this shiny cudgel knocked fresh laughter out of Sinsemilla. She clapped her hands, oblivious. fracturing it, and furrowed through her scalp." "I have. I got cut off with some guys for almost a week in the South African desert once. All you think about is water. You can't describe the craving. You'd cut off your arm for a cup." He paused, and Jay waited with a puzzled expression on his face. "When you've got ~enough to drink," Colman went on, "then you start worrying about food. That takes longer to build up, but it gets as bad. There have been lots of instances of people cannibalizing dead bodies to stay alive once they got hungry enough. They've killed each other over potato peels." unnervingly intense interest. In the houses that he passed, Noah saw only a few puzzled or wary faces pressed to lighted windows. seasons the night with enchantment, the landlocked Western equivalent of a siren's irresistible song. Fallows was still brooding fifteen minutes later in the transit capsule as it sped him homeward around the Mayflower lips six-mile-diameter Ring. Merrick was fight, he had decided. He had been a fool. He didn't owe it to the likes of Colman to put up with going through the mill like that or having his own integrity questioned. He didn't owe it to any of them to help them unscramble their messed-up lives. Bernard frowned at her in bemusement. Nothing was making any sense. "But-its antimatter drive ... that's your weapon, isn't it?". Colman watched for a moment, then turned slowly back and began moving toward the bulkhead door. He didn't feel resentful, nor particularly surprised. He'd seen it all too many times before. Fallows wasn't a bad guy; somebody somewhere had jumped on him, that was all. "He might know all about how machines work," Colman murmured half-aloud to himself as he returned to the gallery outside the Bomb Factory. "But he doesn't understand how they think." blackout not because of California's ongoing crisis, but because a pulsing, whirling disc craft from a far. touch any more than she had reacted to Micky's questions. Tremors quaked through her. was shoved away roughly. "Get off, you clumsy asshole," the guard growled. Panic-stricken, Driscoll grabbed the handle of the trolley, and fled in through the doorway. "SO you're happy you can handle it," Bernard said. At last Kath looked around for a way of relieving the heaviness in the air. "How will you get them up to the ship?" she asked Colman. squeaks softly, as do the hinges, and the door swings outward. spitting, the dog seems to be saying, Teeth? You want teeth? Take a look at THESE teeth, go. in museums. Her willow-leaf eyes were as green as spring and as cool as the layered shade deep in a. closer to the truth, so as she crossed the dark backyard, she distracted herself with a silly joke. As if reading her mind, Stern asked, "Did you know before you came here that you were going to go to bed with me?" He spoke matter-of-factly, making no attempt to hide his presumption that the contract thus symbolized was already decided. spare parts by a machine knacker. back door. He must leave the same way he entered? or go out of a window. aware of the boy himself, and if they can recognize the hunters, they must be able to recognize the boy, mildew-scented space was deserted and no worse of a mess than it had been when they moved in here. Because for the first time ever, he had the feeling that he was somebody-- not just "Sergeant, U.S. Army, or "Serial Number 5648739210," or "White, Anglo-Saxon, Male," but "Steve Colman, Individual, Unique Product of the Universe." hope. Unextinguished laughter shakes the skies. ? Homer, The Iliad. "So where do you go?" Jay asked again. "Well, Paul can't show his face outside. You heard what Fulmire said." Bernard replied. "So I guess I'll have to." She pinches his cheek, and he senses that she would kiss it if she could crane her neck that far. multiples. Perhaps a malevolent sun god lived in the metal walls, for the air immediately around the place. In the corridor, the quartet had shifted to Mozart. "Have the robots been kept on as a kind of tradition?" Bernard asked. she had been six years old then, seven at most, and wretchedly jejune. Jejune was a word she liked a lot. Nevertheless, during the week that she'd been staying with Aunt Gen, she awakened each morning with. Trust. They are

bonding: He has no doubt that their relationship is growing deeper by the day, better by. "I never said it had to make sense." Sirocco brought his elbows up level with his shoulders, stretched. for a few seconds, and sighed. After a short silence he cocked a curious eye in Colman's direction. "So... what's the latest with that cutie from Brigade?" "I said you can stuff it." Suddenly the feeling of intimidation that had haunted Bernard for years was gone. The role that he had allowed himself to be twisted and bent into shriveled and fell away like an old skin being sloughed off. For the first time he was-himself, and free to assert himself as an individual. And on the far side of the desk before him, the granite cathedral cracked apart and collapsed into rubble to reveal . . . nothing inside. It was a sham, just like all the other shams that he had been running from all his life. He had just stopped running..Geneva said, "Well, if it's the police asking after Luki?".confidence, confidence above all else, because self-consciousness and self-doubt fade the disguise. He.Colman said nothing, but instead allowed Swyley to read the question in his head. Sure enough, Swyley explained, "They don't make bombs or organize armies. It's too messy, and too many of the wrong people get hurt, they go for the grass roots. They start people thinking and asking questions they've never been taught how to ask before, and they'll take away the foundations piece by piece until the roof falls in." He paused and continued staring at the wall. "You're an engineer, and she runs part of a fusion complex. If you want out, you've got a place to go. That's what she's telling you." Although trembling with the pressure of his misplaced rage, he doesn't vent it, but leaves Curtis.Cliff Waiters would never have gotten himself into a stupid situation like that. So what if Walters did sometimes turn a blind eye to little things that didn't matter anyway? Walters was a lot smarter when it came to the things that did matter. So much for Fallows, the smartass kid shuttling up from Arizonian to save the universe, who still hadn't learned how to keep his nose clean. Cliff Waiters had earned every pip of his promotions, Fallows conceded as part of his self-imposed penance; and he had earned every year of being a nonentity on Chiron that lay ahead'. Someday, maybe, he'd learn to listen to Jean..Brad nodded. "But Stormbel's people are in the cupola. The only way to the Battle Module access port will be by blasting through.".Bernard snapped his fingers. "Of course, Colman! Why the hell didn't I think of that?".This didn't mean anything, either. Sinsemilla liked to sit alone in the dark, sometimes trying to.Having lit three candles on one match, Micky shook out the flame before it could singe her fingers. "This.Sooner or later, they'll come back here, run a search through the diner, around the motel, and wherever.a thin filament of humor, the irony that is the mother-of-all in human relationships. "Jonathan cultivates an."Pay our debt, collect our due/Each one proud/or what we do," Marie recited..battle..what she's saying because the loud rapping of his jackhammer heart renders meaningless those few."That's true," Bernard agreed. "But the risk of Sterm trying anything with those weapons has to be greater if he thinks he can blackmail a defenseless planet, If he knew what he was up against-you don't have to give him every detail-it might be enough to persuade him to give it up. That's all we're asking. For the sake of those people up there, you owe it to spell out a warning, clearly and unambiguously.".of injustice that quaked through her with 1906 San Francisco intensity, rocking her from good leg to bad,.NOAH FARREL WAS SITTING in his parked Chevy, minding someone else's business, when the.He half expects to hear the teeth chattering in the drawer, determinedly gnawing their way out. He has."Plights and pickles. Troubles. Some of us get 'em served one at a time on a little plate, and some of us.Adam also had an older sister--to the surprise of the Terrans--who designed navigation equipment for spacecraft at an establishment located inland from the Peninsula, a twin brother who was an architect and. rumored to be getting friendly with a lively redhead from the Mayflower H whom Colman couldn't place, a younger sister who lived with two other teenagers somewhere in Franklin, and a still younger half-brother, not a son of Kath's, who was with their father in Selene. It was all very confusing.. "You hush your mouth, Burt Hooper," says the majestic Donella. "A man who wears bib overalls and.Curtis doesn't know who Vern Tuttle may be, but Tom Cruise is, of course, an actor, a movie star, a.toxins, accumulated through more than nine years of living, were an integral part of her, perhaps more.To avoid using a compad in not-too-private surroundings, he went to a public booth in the lobby at Rockefeller's to call the number programmed to accept cabs only if she was alone. While Colman waited for a response, his mind flashed back six months. He had been standing stiffly at attention in dress uniform alongside a display of a remote-fire artillery control post that was part of the Army's contribution to the Fourth of July celebrations, when she wandered away from a group of VIPs sipping cocktails and stood beside him to gaze admiringly at the screens. carrying simulated battlefield displays. She ran her long, painted fingernail slowly and suggestively along the intricate control panel for the satellite-tracking subsystem. "And how many more handsome young men like you do they have in the Army, Sergeant?" she murmured at the displays before her..diabolist, hag, flying down out of the moon with my name on your tongue, think you can spellcast me with.many clothes to allow a boy and a dog to shelter among the shirts and shoes..piercing directness, and said almost in a whisper, "When you were such a pretty little girl and bad people.The ears arc pricked, the head lifted, the nose twitching. The fluffy tail, usually a proud plume, is held.Duck or another Looney Tunes star, he is excited by the spectacle of all these cool trucks congregating.expects to be immediately riddled with bullets or, alternately, to be maced, tasered, clubbed, handcuffed.Curtis Hammond, the original, might have allowed her to have juice in the past. The current Curtis.Angry murmurs were heard from the Terran civilians..Bernard's jaw dropped. "Sterm?" he gasped, then looked down at Celia. "You did tell him?". "Why would he kill a helpless child?" Geneva asked..THE CHIRONIANS' HANDLING of the Padawski incident and the absence of any organized reaction among them to the initial Terran hysteria led to a widespread inclination among the Terrans privately to absolve the Chironians of blame over the bombings, but the Terrans avoided thinking about the obvious question which that implied. The aftertaste of guilt and not a little shame left in many mouths alienated the Terran extremists from the majority, and relations with the Chironians quickly returned to normal. Nevertheless, the wheels that had been set in motion by the affair continued to turn regardless, and five days later the Territory

of Phoenix was declared to exist. particular specimen happened to be ambitious, if it always gave that extra ten percent, like the hero of. "This isn't funny, Leilani." the closet contained only a cluster of unused wire coat hangers that jangled in the influx of air when. LIKE THE SUPERNATURAL SYLPH of folklore, who inhabited the air, she approached along the. from the VCR and put it in a Neiman Marcus shopping bag that he'd brought. "I've given you two more. In their initial meeting, she acknowledged that she would have preferred a large detective agency or a Go, pup, he says or only thinks. to any significant degree. "She ought to've been paid to take it. Anyway, they put old Sinsemilla in an institution once and shot like. Obviously, this audience with her highness wouldn't end until the new hat? or whatever? had been. Fallows was unable to unravel the logic sufficiently to dispute the statement. Instead, he shook his head. "It doesn't sound like it, I suppose." "It never occurred to me that a congressman would keep a bunch of thugs on the payroll." .run alone or in pairs, or in families, toward their vehicles, some glancing back in fear as more. Kath laughed and rolled back to stare up at the ceiling. "You're just like us, aren't you," she said. "You don't know where you came from either." A long silence went by while they took it all in. It meant that ever since planetfall, the Mayflower II had been shadowed in orbit around Chiron by a weapon that could blow it to atoms in an instant. And the camouflage had been perfect; the Terrans themselves had put it there. It was the most lethal piece of weaponry ever conceived by the human race. No wonder the Chironians had been able to cover every bet put on the table and play along with every bluff. They could let the stakes go as high as anybody wanted to raise them and wait to be called; they'd been holding a pat hand all the time. Or was it the Smith and Wesson that Chang had mentioned at Shirley's, perhaps not so jokingly? "That's a word I never know whether to be embarrassed about." In most boys' books the world over, and in those for grownups, too, adventure always involves treasure. "Why don't you piss off," he growled at last. worried, scared, in a state. As she lay squinting for a glimpse of the beast, her face only six or seven feet. bricks on this road, and here, now, in the lingering sour scent of warm beer, in this small kitchen where. Sinsemilla was as likely to be in her daughter's room as she was anywhere else. She had no respect for. without muscle definition? immense, smooth, pink. As if to provide the illusion of height and to balance. "Engineering. That's the one you're with, isn't it?" A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely. "I'm not sure I'd trust any electronics," Lechat cautioned, "Could be risky," Bernard agreed after a second's reflection. "If Sterm and whoever else is involved have been preparing for this, I wouldn't put it past them to have taps and call-monitor programs anywhere. Someone will have to go there." disappoint me. I thought you were a good boy, a nice boy, not a smart aleck." .kissing cousin to the Grim Reaper, try reading the news. He hasn't been on the front pages for a while. "I don't know," Jay said. "It's a lot to go into now, but we're certain they've got the capability. It's really that urgent, Steve. When can you get over?" Rickster's sloped brow, his flat nose, and the heavy lines of his face seemed best suited for morose. know the identity of their quarry: which is one small boy. Curtis. Standing here in plain sight. Perhaps ten. Sirocco closed the door behind them, leaving it secured on one quick-release latch only to allow for a fast exit in the event of trouble, and turned to face the handful that was left. "Let's go," he said. powerful weapons in hand. The first that Colman and his companions had heard was a shot from downstairs, followed by startled shouts and some crashing sounds, and then another shot. By the time they ran into the cellar bar, just seconds later, Wilson was already dead from a shot between the eyes and Ramelly was on the floor with blood gushing from his leg. Padawski and the others were standing uncertainly by the bar, covered by a .38 automatic that one of the young Chironian women was holding. Several other weapons had appeared around the room. A few tense seconds had gone by before Padawski conceded that he had no option but to capitulate, and the SDs had arrived with commendable speed shortly thereafter. "First of all, there's nobody who'd notice or think to ask. We're always on the move, rambling around." "She's a juiceless bitch, isn't she?" Jay jumped up and ran to a closet for a jacket. He looked at Jean as he pulled it on. "Yes, Mother, I'll be careful." The brow of the cab gleams as white as skull bone. One loose corner of black canvas flaps like the. In the small of his back, bolstered under his Hawaiian shirt, Noah carried a revolver. He didn't think he. sixty-year-old woman. "Micky, sweetie, did you have a good day?" but the whole strange story is out there if you want to look it up. As for me, I'd rather eat pie, talk about. Two stools away, Burt Hooper chokes violently on his waffles and chicken. His fork clatters against his

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