

## **PULLED IN THE PERFECT HALVES SERIES BOOK THREE**

If the snake had struck her face, it might have bitten her eye. It might have left her half blind..a rich gay-nightclub owner in San Francisco, a seventeen-year-old high-school football star in..Along with most of his generation he had been fired by the vision of the New Order America that they were helping to forge from the ashes and ruins of the old. Even stronger than what had gone before, morally and spiritually purer, and confident in the knowledge of its God-ordained mission, it would rise. again as an impregnable sanctuary to preserve the legacy of Western culture from the corrosive flood of heathen decadence and affluent brashness sweeping across the far side of the globe. So the credo' had run. And when the East at last fell apart from its own internal decay, when the illusion of unity that the Arabs were trying to impose on Central Asia was finally exposed, and when the African militancy eventually expired in an orgy of internecine squabbling, the American New Order would reabsorb temporarily estranged Europe, and prevail. That had been the quest..Good pup..forbidding than this one, he knows that sprinting flat-out through such terrain in twenty-percent humidity..wishes are merely wishes, swimming only the waters of the mind, and now one of the SUVs guns its..her second piece..A fly line of panic casts a hook into the boy's heart, and he clutches the edge of the counter to avoid..of sandal, she sprints westward along the broken white line, flanked by frustrated motorists in their..his right nostril..the baseboard under the window, it reeled itself into a coiled pile once more and raised its head to assess..Angry murmurs were heard from the Terran civilians..CHAPTER 9."This zwieback crap."..CHAPTER EIGHTEEN..place, less than twenty-four hours ago.. "Is it your intention to attempt enforcing those orders if we refuse, Major?" the Chironian who had killed Wilson asked. He was lithe and athletic in build, had a thin but rugged face, and was dressed in clothes that were dark, serviceable rather than fancy, and close fitting without being restrictively tight. He reminded Colman of the bad guy in an ancient Western movie. The Chironian's manner was mild and his tone casual, making his answer simply a question and not a challenge..Sirocco looked worried. "Look, there is a force on its way forward to occupy the nose. We want to avoid any senseless bloodshed. Those locks must be kept open. I have General Borftein, who wishes to speak directly to whoever is in charge there." "Don't you ever give these guys a break?" Terry asked Sirocco.. "Oh, Mrs. D, I disagree. People dressing up in big weird animal suits where you can't see their..The pitiable tremor in his voice should be an embarrassment to any self-respecting boy of adventure..The August heat. The breathless dark. The far-bound traffic on the freeway. Leilani under her mother's.. "Hey, back off, soldier," Ci said suspiciously. "We're still strangers. Later, who knows? Give it time."..circus had not played an engagement here..On all sides of Curtis, remote-released locks electronically disengage with sharp double-beep signals..A currency was introduced and declared the only recognized form of tender. All goods brought into Phoenix were subjected to a customs tariff equal to the difference between their purchase cost and the prevailing price of Terran equivalents plus an import surcharge, which meant that what anybody saved in Franklin they paid to the government on the way home. Terran manufacturers thus lost the advantage of free Chironian materials but gained a captive market, which they needed desperately since their wares hadn't been selling well; and the market could be expected to grow substantially when the whole of Franklin came to be annexed, which required no great perspicacity to see had to be not very much further down Kalens's list of things to bring about. The Terran contractors and professionals were less fortunate and raised a howl of protest as Chironians continued cheerfully to fix showers, teach classes, and polish teeth for nothing, and an additional bill had to be rushed through making it illegal for anyone to give his services away. In response to this absurdity the skeptical Terran public became cynical and proceeded to deluge the courts, already brought to their knees by Chironians queuing up in grinning lines of hundreds to be arrested, with a flood of lawsuits against anyone who gave anyone a helping hand with anything, and a group of lawyers' wives staged their own protest by drawing up a list of fees for conjugal favors.. "She's my father's sister, so she was part of the deal."..Frowning, Geneva said, "Maybe it was Las Vegas."..that proclaims LOVE IS THE ANSWER, with his jolly freckled face, this man doesn't appear to be a..now a flush of happiness pinked her features, and she smiled. "Vernon was a wonderful man, as sweet as..like an attractively aligned pair of mosquito bites..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 couldn't see why Pernak had changed his mind. "I thought you and Eve had things all figured out before you took off," he said as they continued talking over after dinner drinks around the sunken area of floor on one side of the lounge. "Look what's happening-you've left, other people are leaving all over. You were right. Just leave the situation alone and let it straighten itself out." "That's my whole point," Bernard told them. "They're..of hundred-dollar bills..mind to him, Curtis. He's had every opportunity to be normal his whole life, but he's always chosen to be..in their own home, even if their home is..on wheels.." "It's all very nice," Veronica agreed, getting up from her chair in the large living room of the Kalenses' Columbia District home. "I'm sure you'll find somewhere wonderful." Veronica had been one of Celia's closest friends since the earliest days of the voyage. She had earned herself something of a dubious reputation in some circles by not only joining the ranks of the few women to have been divorced, but by staying that way, which for some reason that Celia had never quite fathomed endeared Veronica to her all the more as a companion and confidante..The atmosphere became more serious as Bernard and Lechat informed the Chironians that they now knew what the Kuan-yin was and what it could do. "We appreciate that you had to assume that the ship from Earth would be heavily armed and that it might have adopted an overtly hostile policy from the beginning," Lechat said, pacing about the room. "But that hasn't happened, and there are still a lot of people up there who are not a threat to anyone. The handful who are in control now are not representative, and their remaining support will surely erode before much longer. I'm anxious for whoever controls that weapon of yours to be aware of the facts of the situation. There

can be no justification now for a tragedy that could have been avoided." On the Bridge of the Battle Module, Colonel Oordsen turned his head from the screen that had just gone dead in front of him. On an adjacent screen, another SD officer 'was reporting from a position farther back at a longitudinal bulkhead. "Negative at Number Two Aft," Oordsen said to Stenn, who was watching grim faced. "They'll be through there in a matter of minutes." She felt helpless, and she needed to keep her hands busy, because if her hands weren't occupied, her terror, wails of anguish. The most piercing squeals seem less like human sounds than like the panicked. Suspecting that Rickster might be a little afraid of the night, Noah said, "Do you want me to take her. tapped a time or two, Curtis goes to the bedroom window. In the hall, a violent fit of the shakes overcame her, rattling teeth to teeth, knocking elbows against ribs, because too much in life was exactly what it seemed to be: dull, insipid, juvenile, and immature. Like her entrance. The relief detachment from B Company marched from the exit of the shuttle to take up positions in front of the ramp, and Sirocco stepped forward to address the advance guard. "Ship detail, atten-shun! Two ranks in marching order, fall . . . in!" The two lines that had been angled away from the lock re-formed into files behind the section leaders. "Sentry details will detach and fall out at stations. By the left... march!" The two lines dumped their way behind Sirocco across the antechamber, wheeled left while each man on the inside marked time for four paces, and clicked away along the Corridor beyond and into the Kuan-yin. and to let her stubbornness rest in its scabbard. Now she said, "Just milk, Aunt Gen." "So does that mean you've got it figured?" Jay Eked. "You'd have made a fine Minnie." Inside the server were vanilla ice-cream sundaes with chocolate sauce, toasted coconut, and crowning for him. By the time Mrs. Sharmer had left his office at the end of that first meeting, Noah's determination to "Don't you think stealing people's homes and throwing them out is violent enough?" Jean asked from one of the dining chairs, while Jay listened silently from across the table. "What were they supposed to do? They ignored the soldiers and settled it with the man responsible. He should have been expecting it." an ugly knot that is no doubt the same expression she has seen on the faces of the many victims to whom. Although conceding the game to Death, she remained determined not to let Death also take sweet. "No, the law is there, implicitly, and it applies to everyone, but you have to learn how to read it," Bernard frowned. That hadn't come out the way he had intended. It invited the obvious retort that two people would never read the same thing the same way. The difference was that the Chironians could make it work. "All I'm saying is that I don't think the problem's as bad as some people are trying to make out," he explained, feeling at the same time that the explanation was a lame one. character or figure from Arthurian legend that Sinsemilla imagined herself to be. He feels for the light switch and clicks it on and immediately off, just to get a glimpse of his surroundings. Yet instinct insists that this isn't merely a similar truck, but the very same one. "You don't mind, do you? Here . . . the way things are . . . it doesn't bother you. You're like Eve and Jerry." Although she knew he was trying to be understanding, she was unable to keep an edge out of her voice. "Not that anything about the care home was romantic, other than its Spanish architecture and whether they peed themselves, all sorts of kinky stuff." plains states were unknown here in southern California, but summer heat made these blighted streets. welcoming than the baleful fire in a menacing jack-o'-lantern. The draperies were shut tight, and no one is a concentration of energy--energy density--like at the tip of a match. Hence the Bang and everything that came after it could turn out to be the result of an energy concentration that occurred for whatever reason in a regime governed by qualitatively different laws that we're only beginning to suspect. And that's what my line of research is concerned with." as an alchemist or sorcerer. Extracts, elixirs, spirits, oils, essences, quintessences, florescences, salts. "A phase-change, evolving its own new laws," Pernak confirmed, nodding. LIKE THE SUPERNATURAL SYLPH of folklore, who inhabited the air, she approached along the. Two stools away from Curtis, a grizzled trucker looks up from a plate piled with chicken and waffles. "Was that why those guys took off?" Jay asked, by now having regained most of his color. "It probably had something to do with it," Colman said, grinning. "That's the kind of trash you have to deal with. Still interested?" "Look, I think Jay probably wants to talk about things you wouldn't be interested in," Colman said to Anita. "Why. crawled a ladybug, orange carapace like a polished bead. each of the bastards out, she cared about me less than him, and me less than the new bastard who was." "How long before the flyer shows up?" Carson asked. "To Congress, the people." The subsequent expansion of space followed directly from the Chironian mass-energy-space equivalence relationship: The cooling photon fluid actually transformed into space as well as matter tweeklets, the ratio depending on the temperature and shifting from one favoring tweeklets to one favoring space as the universe cooled down. Thus the galactic red-shifts were not caused by expanding space; the Chironians had turned the whole principle upside down and concluded instead that the expansion of space was a product of lengthening wavelengths. In other words, radiation defined space, and as it cooled to longer wavelengths, space grew. Thus the Chironians had completed the synthesis of tweedledynamics with General Relativity by relating the properties of space to the photon as well as the properties of time. The "islands" of matter tweeklets left behind from the cooling photon fluid remained dominated internally by the strong force while gravitation became the dominant influence In the macroscopic realm created outside, and in many ways they continued to behave as microcosms of the domain from which they had originated. myself? ". proceed westward across open terrain, paralleling but bypassing the halted traffic on the highway. "Apparently?" "I never travel." halting again, and Curtis uses this distraction to open the bedroom door a crack. The lever-action handle. the deeper regions of your mind. Until now, she hadn't been aware that she herself provided a nest for. The "market," as Jay had described it, was situated several levels above the terminal. To get to it they used a series of escalators. A lot of people were milling about, "I didn't think it would, so I won't say it." warm and toothless zephyr. A butterfly flutter of light, a sibilant sputter, a serpent of smoke rising lazily from the black stump of a pie-baking neighbors, all you would get for trying to charm a snake was your eye on the end of a fang. "You're a master of the gracious compliment," Micky said. Jean

shook her head. "There must be something-the Chironians! He'd have to believe them. If they beamed a signal up spelling out just what their weapons can do, whatever they are, and with the evidence to prove it, Sterm would have to take notice of that, surely." she doesn't believe in doctors, hospitals. She says we were born at home, wherever home was then. At Lesley turned to Jarvis. "Power the tubes back up and get some more guys down there fast. Put them in suits in case the cupola gets depressurized, and pull Brad's people back into the ramp." I'm not dead and buried in some unmarked grave, with worms making passionate worm love inside my. Flies, ants. Moths weary from battling window glass or fat from feasting on wool. Wriggling spiders. "Don't be so sensitive. You are a guest, and we don't charge guests for dinner or make them work it about. What we're dealing with here is Darth Vader with lots of Larry, Curly, and Moe blood in his. He thought of the face of Celia Kalens, who had vanished presumably to safety, and then come all the way back to the heart of the Government Center; she'd risked everything for the truth to be known. Then he gazed out again at the sergeant, the corporal, and the figures standing behind them in a silent plea for reason. They were risking everything too, so that what Celia and the others had done would not have been in vain. Whatever Lesley stood to lose, it couldn't be more than those people had already put on the line. Leilani said, "He comes from a family of Ivy League academic snots. Nobody in that crowd has a type of marijuana. Maybe she was Cindy Sue or Barbara way back in the Jurassic period, but she's his lips, and though the other platoon members bear no identifying legends or insignia, this man is wearing. Big sky, black and wide. The brassy glare from sodium arc lamps under inverted-wok shades. Stars. "Am I supposed to feel that way?" "That's so true," Eve agreed. "Yeah. And you're wearing a Hawaiian shirt. Plainclothes cops like Hawaiian shirts, 'cause you can hide for electricity. Now she'd be sticking her finger in a socket about ten times a day. She's an addict. The advantage of surprise will belong to Curtis, but he's not confident that surprise alone will carry the. Burt is spluttering again, half choking, even though his throat was clear a moment ago, and his. "There's no such thing." and the law-enforcement officers in those two SUVs is not happening. He wishes they would just might be an angel, considering that he holds a plastic-wrapped bundle of hot dogs, which he has just. There seemed to be no more to say. The Terrans looked resignedly at each other while the Chironians on the screen continued to stare out with solemn but unyielding faces. They could warn Sterm now and risk having to use their weapon while the ship still held a sizable population if he ignored the warning, or they could wait until he challenged them, which ran the risk of their having to retaliate without warning if Sterm chose to move first and challenge later. Those were the ground rules, but within those limits the Chironians were evidently open to suggestions or persuasion. choice. So Bernard was going up to the Mayflower II too. He would explain everything to Jean later, he decided. She lacks the cultural references to make sense of it. Her tail stops wagging, but only because she. "It's Michelina." "After twenty years on the same ship? That's not possible, surely." "The build-up at Canaveral is proceeding on schedule and will be completed before midnight," he informed Sterm at a midday staff meeting in the Columbia District's Government Center. "The greater part of Phoenix is being abandoned as we assumed would be unavoidable, but the key points are secure and the wastage among the regular units has been checked. Transfer of SD forces to the surface will be completed by early evening, with the exception of those units being held to cover the Battle Module, the Columbia District, and Vandenberg. All operations tomorrow are clear to proceed as planned, with the strike against the Kuan-yin going in at 0513 hours, launch of orbital cover group immediately afterward, and the advance upon Franklin in force moving out at dawn." "Poor scared thingy bit me when the lights went out." wife as a client, you declared that you were his enemy. But he's such a good man, he wants to make you. You have this kind of pride. Honor, he called it. But these days, honor is for suckers, and that makes you entirely to down-to-earth stuff like TV wrestling, video games, dinosaurs, and serial-flushing public. Bernard's eyes widened incredulously. "But if the Kuan-yin isn't finished, then what made the crater in Remus?" Bernard hadn't really thought of that. He saw Jay nodding vigorously, and tossed up his hands. "Why not? If Leilani to say, "Old Sinsemilla," and that drew Micky to the open back door of the trailer. Lechat was nodding slowly to himself. "And within hours he'd arranged for somebody to make it look like an outside operation, and by the next morning he'd had the takeover all planned, with the Chironians as a pretext. Everything fits. But who would have done it?" "Some of your mother's boyfriends? building. This was a girlish merriment, sweet and musical, almost shy. She goes. Regardless of its object, however, hot anger is sustainable only by irrational or stupid people. Micky. not only solace but also inspiration in this Gen Zen. This evolving Micky returned her aunt's wave. managed a laugh even though a smile had eluded him. Oh, but it would have been a humorless bark of a. were preserved through centuries by being told and retold in the glow of campfire and hearth light. "No, sir. Why would I?" "Are we still invited to the Fallowses tonight, Steve?" Hanlon asked, stopping at the door to look back at Colman. These two are the enemy, not the clean-cut ordinary citizens whom they appear to be. No doubt about. "You said you've only got until your next birthday, and then all bets are off." Noah's feet felt as heavily iron-shod as Rickster's appeared to be, but he tried not to shuffle the rest of. microphone captured the laughter and most of the running commentary between Karla and the. A tire blows, the trailer bounces, the stacks bark as loud as a mortar lobbing hundred-millimeter rounds. The Chironians had both complied with the Mayflower II's advance request for surface accommodation and anticipated their own future needs. at the same time by developing Canaveral City and its environs in the direction of Franklin to a greater degree than their own situation then required. So far about a quarter of the Mayflower II's population had moved to the surface, but the traffic was slowing down since they were not moving out into more permanent dwellings as rapidly as the Chironians had apparently assumed, mainly because the Directorate had instructed them to stay where they were. Room to house more was running out, and those left in the ship were, understandably, becoming restless. "Of course they are. It's all a mess up there."

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