

“Karking hell,” Bentre growled as he watched the movement of several humans and a Togruta march past the grate. He had managed to hide away within the ventilation system. There hadn’t been enough time to hide away better than that. There was not enough room to turn or to better hide. He just had to hope they didn’t look his way. He couldn’t calm his emotions well enough to cloak himself in the Force. The running had winded him, and he could focus well enough.

*Force help me*, the Corellian silently begged to the empty universe as he watched one of the men turn briefly, *by all the Hells and Corellian gods, just go on boyo*. The man shook his head in spite of himself. From time to time he still found himself thinking back to the ways of his childhood. He knew the Force had a will of its own, but he doubted that will went far enough to care about the life of one man on a ship. He was on his own.

His heartbeat did not slow as the man turned and hurried off to catch back up with his compatriots. As the sound of the man’s footsteps echoed away, Bentre moved toward the grate, moving it aside to allow him to slip out. Wiggling carefully, the man freed himself from the tight quarters. Slowly his foot came free and the Sith was able to use a foot planted outside of the vent to push himself back out into the hallway.

“Okay, so this is going to get pretty bad quickly if I don’t find a way to turn the tides. Standing in the open for several moment, he considered the small assortment of weapons before his eyes came to rest on the Denton charge. If he had not left his Hunter-Killer droid back on Sepros, he might have used the droid carrying such a charge to walk down the hallway as he ran the other way.

*You could still use it*, the cool voice of his subconscious cooed quietly, *if you are lucky it would crack this ship in half. All you would need to do is get to an escape pod, launch off and hit the remote detonator. Just sit and watch the fireworks. Unless you are really that-*

“Enough,” Bentre muttered to himself as he clutched the charge. With a sigh, he reached back into the vent, placing the explosive on the inside of the opening. Throwing caution to the wind, the man began to run the direction opposite of the soldiers. He drew deep breaths with each steps, willing his legs to push harder, to drive him forward with greater speed.

Stahoes tried to focus on backtracking his steps through the passageways as he whirled through openings, turning before running down another toward what he believed were the escape pods. The man had to skid to a stop as he came face to face with a pair of Rodians, who turned with blasters drawn toward the intruder.

“Freeze!” The nearer of the Rodians cried.

“Kriffing,” Bentre drew his blaster, letting loose three shots in a smooth action. The first shot went wide, but the two remaining shots managed to make their mark. *Perhaps this is a good sign. The crew would be guarding the only known way off the ship.*

To his relief, when Bentre got to the doorway at the far end of this hallway, he saw a placard reading: EMERGENCY PODS. Pushing the control panel beside the door, the man smiled as the familiar site of the pods met his eyes. When he ran to the nearest pod, it appeared they had not been locked. *Against all odds, the Force is with me today.* As the Sadowan slammed the button to open the pods, he heard the ringing of boots on the metal floor back in the hallway.

“He must have come this way! He left the guards to lay outside.”

*What a time to get sloppy,* Bentre chided himself as he slammed the closing mechanism with a fist. The Togruta from before poked into the room, firing twice at the pod before the mechanism dropped the Corellian infiltrator down toward the planet below.

“We’ll see how well you like this now,” Bentre growled as he pulled the remote detonator from his side. He looked upward, imagining the look on the soldiers’ faces as he pushed down the button. When the ripples of the explosion began to shake the airtight container holding him, Bentre grasped the handholds on either side, hoping to the great unseen Force, the gods of Corellia and chance itself that his pod would not be engulfed in the explosion.