

## An Odd Family Situation

### **Versea Estate**

#### **Ryloth**

#### **35 ABY**

"I am glad of one thing." Bentre smiled at his cooing daughter as he rocked her. The pale blue Twi'lek cuddled up into the crook of her father's arm. The sight brought a warm smile to the Battlelord's face. "At least you won't have to deal with your parents being absent all the time."

"What was that, honey?" The voice of his wife echoed from the hallway. That must have meant that Tasha'Vel had completed her work in the basement. She refused to reveal the exact nature of her task, but as it gave time for Stahoes to focus on his daughter alone, he decided not to question it too much. Surely, the Versea Matriarch would eventually reveal matters to him.

"Oh, I was just talking to the *little'n*." He shook his head as he realized his native Corellian speech style had reasserted itself. It was in those tender moments that he heard it most. In public, he had to be the strong leader, had to be strong foundation. He had to serve as a moor to which his Clan could affix. He had to be a steadfast support to Sanguinius and take on part of the Consul's burdens. He had so little time to let down his guard."

"What is on your mind, Ben?" When the Patriarch looked sideways, he saw the concern in his wife's expressive emerald eyes. This caused a pang of guilt that Bentre could not quite explain in his gut.

"I was just thinking about my childhood. There were a lot of odd things that occurred over the years. Some things that can cause a child to doubt the status quo. There were all these little oddities over the years. Some of them were little more than the same turns of fate that any family might experience. The loss of my father's original job making us move from Coronet for a few months was a prime example. However, there were a lot of other things that still bug me even as a man today."

"Surely it can be as bad as you make it out?" Her tone urged him to continue his thoughts.

Bentre chuckled as he considered his daughter. "I just want her to have a solid family life. It won't be the easiest growing up in an environment like Naga Sadow. I remember how people expected me to behave a certain way given my father's occupation. I remember that some of the school instructors seemed to look down on me for my own rowdiness." Bentre felt his expression drop as he considered his own words. "It wasn't that kind of stuff that got to me though or that gets to me now. It was the problems with my family. The feeling that I wasn't what my family wanted."

"I kept telling myself," he continued, "it was all in my head. The love of a parent is unconditional, right? It didn't seem that way, though. The fights brought attention to my folks and above all they seemed to despise that attention. I would have understood if they were angry at me for coming home from a fight but that never seemed to be the case. It seemed instead like they were angry because I had embarrassed them, or something worse."

His wife squeezed his flesh and blood arm. "No, honey. They couldn't have felt that way. You were just a kid. You must have misun-

"I did **not** just misunderstand." Bentre's lip curled at the third word, his eyes flashing in anger. "I saw the way that they looked at me when the messages came from the school. I know the kind of things they expected of me. They wanted me to be this perfect little boy. I was supposed to be the model student and the good kid, not the brawler and the rabble rouser. My parents wanted a trophy child. Even that wasn't the thing that killed me though on its own. The reaction from my extended family is what really dug into me."

"Bentre, you keep saying-

"My aunt only ever visited us once. I barely even got to talk to her before my parents rushed her away. There was no word from her, there was no acknowledgment of her sister's son or affection in her eyes. It was as though I was never there! I never saw my Uncle. My father spoke of him at length with Mom when she thought I was asleep. He made it sound as though they were the greatest of buddies, working together and even fishing together on many an afternoon. My father didn't want to take me along, and my uncle had no interest in spending time either."

Tasha'Vel shook her head vehemently. "It won't be the same with Lyna'Vel. She had a *home* here and a *family* both at home and in the Clan. Just because you folks were shunned by part of your family doesn't mean she will be."

"You are still not quite listening to everything I am saying." Bentre's voice became cooler with each word. "My family was perfectly happy to socialize with each other. My folks didn't think that I understood that fact, but it was awfully evident." He could feel his Corellian accent coming back again as he spoke, rounding some of his words in that local twang. "I din' think it was possible to be so shunned by your own flesh 'nd blood."

"Did you ever ask your parents why though, honey? Did you ever question them as to why they didn't include you? Did you ever ask about your extended family?"

"Why?" Bentre laughed in spite of himself. "They abandoned me in the end. I came back home after the years away and there was nothing left. I shouldn't have been surprised." Disgust filled the man's words as he recalled the return to the place he once called home. "Do you know that my mother sometimes forgot my name? She called me *Bentyl*. Not once or twice, but on enough occasions that I secretly began to loathe my mother. She never knew I am sure. She would

have had to pay me enough attention to realize. It didn't matter though. My parents were worms, mere cretin."

"Are you afraid that you are going to become like them?" Tasha'Vel's question hung uncomfortably in the air for several moments before her husband let out a grunt of dismissal.

"I could not bring myself to care as little as they did, Tasha'. My daughter is my prodigy and my legacy. More than that she is my flesh and blood. I couldn't do what my folks did to me to her." Looking down, he could see Lyna'Vel had passed out as her parents talked. Stahoes hugged his now-sleeping daughter to his chest. "She is more precious than that."

The Versea Matriarch nodded wisely, a small smile brightening her previously-somber face. "So what would you tell your parents if you *could* tell them about how you felt?"

The Sadowan Proconsul looked hard at his wife before snorting. "If I could tell them about how I felt, I would let them know the full weight of their error. I would inform them of the child they created and what has become of him."

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**CLASSIFIED LOCATION**  
**SEPROS, ORIAN SPACE**  
**LATER THAT EVENING**

"So, you see I told her all about how things went down." The excited voice of Bentre echoed in the small chamber amidst the hissing of machinery. "The wild thing is, she suggested I talk to my parents about the whole thing. Could you imagine!?" Rather than wait for a response, the Sith walked across the small chamber to retrieve a wicked-looking tool from the table in front of a repurposed bacta tank. Rather than bacta, the tube had been filled with water, with a snakework of wires poking into it at various points.

Inside the tube was an aging man. Amber eyes poked out from behind haunted eyelids. The man's grey-black hair was splayed wildly inside the tube. The expression in his face was one of almost resignation. If Sang only knew of this little side project, there might have been some hope for the human, but Bentre had been very careful. A face mask had been affixed to the prisoner in order to ensure that he didn't asphyxiate while the Sadowan had his fun.

"I mean, come on Dad. If you had any regret over how things turned out, you would have told me by now, right?" Though he waited, there was little response from his captive. Stahoes fingered his datapad, before pushing the button on its side. An arch of electricity arced along the wires on the outside of the tank, and the body of the older man inside twitched violently. This went on for several minutes before Bentre released the button and the twitching ceased again. This was all that Garhas had known since he and his wife had faced capture at their son's

hands. "Don't worry your head a bit about it Dad. Just tell me what I need to know and Mom doesn't need to suffer anymore. Hell, if the two of you behave, you might even get to meet your grand-daughter!"