

## **The Bridge of Damnation**

**36 ABY, 12 Hours After the Fall of Sepros**

*This is the oddest part,* Bentre mused bitterly. He peered out upon the dark stretches of space, which was broken up haphazardly by the silhouette's of Naga Sadow's broken fleet. Sanguinius was going between ships, helping where he could, supporting the Clan as individuals who were hurting. The Proconsul had been left on the flagship to supposedly supervise.

*What is there to supervise, though? The Collective did what we thought impossible. At the end of the day, Naga Sadow was alone in our struggle. The machinations of those who call upon the name of Shar Dakhan or lean upon the moniker of Marka Ragnos were all to naught.* Stahoes felt his lip curl back in a mix of disgust and frustration. The Dakhani had fought against a local uprising and the Ragnosians had similarly dealt with civil disturbances, with the Quaestors of either House working in their own ways. It felt as though, in dealing with their own **local** issues, the Houses had lost sight. *And Naga Sadow suffers for it.*

*What is there left now? When Sepros is fallen, when the backbone of the Orian system is shattered, what is there for a man to do?* The Corellian began to pace across the bridge, with only a skeleton crew to observe his brooding mood. Weapons had fallen long silent and soldier and Sadowan alike were licking their wounds.

The adrenaline rush of immediate danger escaped was over, leaving only a cold exhaustion behind it. The worry for his wife and daughter had been addressed, Tasha'Vel and Lyna'Vel were both safely aboard a corvette which orbited the *Damnation* at this very moment. The thrill at testing the constraints of his own endurance had proven hollow. Bentre had kept himself distracted for so long with the matters of others. The administration of a planet, of a system had kept him engaged. *What does a man do when most everything that has kept his attention is gone?*

He couldn't deny the importance of his family. Though, if anything had been proven by the Collective's attacks, his family was as vulnerable as the rest of the Clan. Besides, if the machinations of the galaxy claimed his wife, or his daughter, what could he do against that? He was but one man. The future was in motion, and as it was always in motion what could one man do to direct the streams and

directions of fate? *It would take some immense strength to act as a dam when the full weight of fate is working against you. So, he puzzled, what is it that helps to determine the path the streams of life will take?*

As he mulled over the Clan's namesake, the answer slowly dawned upon him. He had spent so much time accruing knowledge in the hopes that the answer to preserve his Clan and their power over the Orian system. There was a simpler answer. *Power gives way to power.*

The path forward was simple. He would have to search the stars for a means. He would have to seize power for himself. He would have to convince the Consul that this was the best path to take forward. If he could not, he would do what was necessary. The safety of his family, of his Clan would follow.

If they did not, then the will of an uncaring cosmos did not matter. He was no Jedi, thus the "will" of the Force was a myth, as many understood it. The Force was a tool, and only those with the strength of character, of mind, would be those to see a brighter future. Power was the key, and Bentre would be a force of change for the Clan, and beyond.

If the Clan wanted stability, they would have to fall into line in one way. *There will be stragglers. There will be those who stand in the way of progress. Even I stood on the so-called wrong side of history for a number of years.*

He would call out to his fellow Clan members. He would ask their cooperation, but he would not beg. If force was needed, it would be applied. In time, they would retake their home from the Collective, or would raze it to the ground. Either way, the end of an age was coming. The end to an old age would be the start of a new one.