

## THREE YEARS AFTER ESCAPE FROM CHAPTERHOUSE

Memory is weapon sharp enough to inflict deep wounds.

-- The Mentat's Lament

On the day he died, Rakis, the planet commonly known as Dune, died with him.

*Dune.* Lost forever!

In the archives chamber of the fleeing no-ship *Ithaca*, the gholas of Miles Teg reviewed the desert world's final moments. Melange-scented steam wafted tantalizingly from a stimulant beverage at his left elbow, but the thirteen-year-old ignored it, descending instead into deep Mentat focus. These historical records and holo-images held great fascination for him.

This was where and how his original body had been killed. How a whole world had been murdered. Rakis . . . legendary desert planet -- now no more than a charred ball.

Projected above a flat table, the archival images showed Honored Matre

war vessels gathering above the baked brown globe. The immense, undetectable no-ships -- like the stolen one in which Teg and his fellow refugees now lived -- wielded firepower superior to any the Bene Gesserit had ever employed.

Traditional atomics were little more than a pinprick by comparison.

*Those new weapons must have been developed out in the Scattering.* Teg pursued a simple Mentat projection. *Or was it something else entirely?*

In the floating image, the bristling ships opened fire, unleashing incineration waves with devices the Bene Gesserit had since named "Obliterators." The bombardment had continued until the planet was devoid of life. The sandy dunes were turned to black glass; even Rakis's atmosphere caught fire. Sandworms and cities, people and sand plankton, everything annihilated. Nothing could have survived down there, not even him.

Now, nearly fourteen years later and in a vastly changed universe, the gangly teenager adjusted the study chair to a more comfortable height.

*Reviewing the circumstances of my own death. Again.*

By strict definition, Teg himself was a clone rather than a gholia grown of cells gathered from a dead body, though that was the word most people used to describe him. Inside his young flesh lived an old man, a veteran of numerous campaigns for the Bene Gesserit; he could not remember the last few moments of his life, but these records left little doubt.

The senseless annihilation of Dune demonstrated the true ruthlessness of the Honored Matres. *Whores*, the Sisterhood called them. And for good reason.

Nudging the intuitive finger controls, he called up the images yet again. It felt odd to be an outside observer, knowing that he himself had been down there fighting and dying when these images were recorded. . . .

Teg heard a sound at the door of the archives and saw Sheeana watching him from the corridor. Her face was lean and angular, her skin brown from a Rakian heritage, her unruly umber hair flashed with streaks of copper from a childhood spent under the desert sun. Her eyes were the total blue of lifelong melange consumption, as well as the Spice Agony that had turned her into a Reverend Mother. The youngest ever to survive, Teg had been told.

Sheeana's generous lips held an elusive smile. "Studying battles again, Miles? It's a bad thing for a military commander to be so predictable."

"I have a great many of them to review," Teg answered in his cracking young-man's voice. "The Bashar accomplished a great deal in three hundred standard years, before I died."

When Sheeana recognized the projected record, her expression fell into a troubled mask. Teg had watched those images of Rakis to the point of obsession since they had fled from Chapterhouse into this bizarre and uncharted universe.

"Any word from Duncan yet?" he asked, trying to divert her attention. "He was attempting a new navigation algorithm to get us away from --"

"We know exactly where we are." Sheeana lifted her chin in an unconscious gesture she had come to use more and more often since becoming the leader of this group of refugees. "We are *lost*."

Teg automatically intercepted the criticism of Duncan Idaho. "But it was our intent to prevent anyone -- the Honored Matres, the corrupted Bene Gesserit order, or the mysterious Enemy -- from finding us. At least we're safe."

Sheeana did not seem convinced. "So many unknowns trouble me. Our location, who is chasing us. . . ." Her voice trailed off, and then she said, "I will leave you to your studies. We are about to have another meeting to discuss our situation."

He perked up. "Has anything changed?"

"No, Miles. I expect the same arguments over and over again." She shrugged. "The other Sisters seem to insist on it." With a quiet rustle of robes, she exited the archives chamber, leaving him with the humming silence of the great invisible ship.

*Back to Rakis. Back to my death . . . and the events leading up to it.* Teg rewound the recordings, gathering old reports and perspectives, and watched them yet again, traveling farther backward in time.

Even though his gholia memories had been awakened, they covered only the point up to his death. He needed these records to see how the old Bashar Teg had gotten into such a predicament on Rakis, how he himself had provoked it. Back then, he and his loyal men -- veterans of his many famous campaigns -- had stolen a no-ship on Gammu, a planet that history had once called Giedi Prime, homeworld of the evil but long-exterminated House Harkonnen.

Years earlier, Teg had been brought in to guard the young gholia of Duncan

Idaho, after eleven previous Duncan gholas had been assassinated. The old Bashar succeeded in keeping the twelfth alive until adulthood and finally restoring Duncan's memories. Teg and Duncan's escape while being hunted across Gammu by Honored Matres and their allies, was epic. When one of the whores, Murbella, tried to sexually enslave Duncan, he trapped *her* with unsuspected abilities wired into him by his Tleilaxu creators. It turned out that Duncan was a living weapon specifically designed to thwart the Honored Matres. No wonder the enraged women were so desperate to find and kill him.

After slaughtering hundreds of Honored Matres and their minions, the old Bashar hid among men who had sworn their lives to protect him. No great general had commanded such loyalty since Paul Muad'Dib, perhaps even since the fanatical days of the Butlerian Jihad. Amidst drinks, food, and misty-eyed nostalgia, the Bashar had explained that he needed them to steal a *no-ship* for him. Though the task seemed impossible, the veterans never questioned a thing.

Ensnared in the archives now, the young gholas reviewed surveillance records from Gammu's spaceport security, images taken from tall Guild Bank buildings in the city. Each step of the assault made perfect sense to him, even as he studied the records many years later. *It was the only way to succeed, and we accomplished it. . . .*

After flying to Rakis, Teg and his men had found Reverend Mother Odrade and Sheeana (the native girl who could communicate with sandworms) riding a giant old worm to meet the no-ship as it landed out in the great desert. Time was

short. The whores would be coming, apoplectic because the Bashar had made fools of them on Gammu. On Rakis, he and his surviving men took their armored vehicles and extra weapons and left the no-ship. Time for one last, but vital, engagement.

Before the Bashar led his loyal soldiers out to face the Honored Matres, Odrade casually but expertly scratched the skin of his leathery neck, not-so-subtly collecting cell samples. Both Teg and the Reverend Mother understood it was the Sisterhood's last chance to preserve one of the greatest military minds since the Scattering. They realized he was about to die. Miles Teg's last battle.

By the time the Bashar and his men clashed with Honored Matres on the ground, other groups of the whores were swiftly taking over the Rakian population centers. They slew the Bene Gesserit Sisters who remained behind in Keen. They killed the Tleilaxu Masters and the Priests of the Divided God.

The battle was already lost, but Teg and his troops hurled themselves against the enemy defenses with unparalleled violence. Since Honored Matre hubris would not allow them to accept such humiliation, the whores retaliated against the whole world, destroying everything and everyone there. Including him.

In the meantime, however, the old Bashar's fighters had created a diversion so the no-ship could escape, carrying Odrade, the Duncan ghola, and Sheena, who had tempted the ancient sandworm into the vessel's cavernous cargo hold. Soon after the ship flew to safety, Rakis was destroyed and that worm became

the last of its kind.

That had been Teg's first life. His real memories ended there.

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Watching images of the final bombardment, Teg wondered at what point his original body had been obliterated. Did it really matter? Now that he was alive again, Miles Teg had a second chance.

Using cells Odrade had taken from his neck, the Sisterhood grew a copy of their Bashar and triggered his genetic memories. The Bene Gesserit had known they would require his tactical genius in the war with the Honored Matres. And the boy Teg had led the Sisterhood to its victory on Gammu and Junction. He had done everything they asked of him.

Later, he and Duncan, along with Sheeana and her dissidents, had stolen the no-ship yet again and fled from Chapterhouse, unable to bear what Murbella was allowing to happen to the rest of the Bene Gesserit. Better than anyone else, they understood about the mysterious Enemy that continued to hunt for them, no matter how lost the no-ship might be. . . .

Weary with facts and forced memories, Teg switched off the records, stretched his thin arms, and left the archives sector. He would spend several hours in vigorous physical training, then work on his weapons skills.

Though he lived in the body of a thirteen-year-old, it was his job to remain ready for everything and never lower his guard.