

Legend holds that a pearl of Leto II's awareness remains within each of the sandworms that arose from his divided body. The God Emperor himself said he would henceforth live in an endless dream.

But what if he should waken? When he sees what we have done with ourselves, will the Tyrant laugh at us?

-- Priestess Ardath, the Cult of Sheeana on the planet Dan

Though the desert planet had been roasted clean of all life, the soul of Dune survived aboard the no-ship. Sheeana herself had seen to that.

She and her sober-faced aide Garimi stood at the viewing window above the Ithaca's great hold. Garimi watched the shallow dunes stirring as the seven captive sandworms moved. "They have grown."

The worms were smaller than the behemoths Sheeana remembered from Rakis, but larger than any she had seen on the overly moist desert band of Chapterhouse. The environmental controls in this ship's vast hold were precise enough to provide a perfect simulated desert.

Sheeana shook her head, knowing the creatures' primitive memories must recall swimming through an endless sea of dunes. "Our worms are crowded, restless. They have no place to go."

Just before the whores obliterated Rakis, Sheeana had rescued an ancient sandworm and transported it to Chapterhouse. Near death when it arrived, the behemoth broke down soon after it touched the fertile soil. Its skin fissioned into thousands of reproducing sandtrout that burrowed into the ground. Over the next fourteen years, those sandtrout began to transform the lush world into another arid wasteland, a new home for the worms. Finally, when conditions were right, the magnificent creatures rose again -- small ones at first, that over time would become larger and more powerful.

When Sheeana had decided to escape from Chapterhouse, she took some of the stunted sandworms with her.

Fascinated by movement in the sand, Garimi leaned closer to the plaz observation window. The dark-haired aide's expression was so serious it belonged on a woman decades older. Garimi was a workhorse, a true Bene Gesserit conservative who had the parochial tendency to see the world around her as straightforward, black and white. Though younger than Sheeana, she clung to Bene Gesserit purity, offended by the idea of the hated Honored Matres joining the Sisterhood. Garimi had helped Sheeana develop the risky plan that allowed them to escape from the "corruption."

Now, looking at the restless worms, Garimi said, "Now that we are out of that other universe, when will Duncan find us a world? When will he decide we're safe?"

The Ithaca had been built to serve as a great city in space. Artificially lit

sectors were designed as greenhouses, while algae vats and recycling ponds provided less palatable food. Because it carried a relatively small number of passengers, the no-ship's supplies and scrubbing systems would provide food, air, and water for decades yet. The current population barely registered on the vessel's capacity.

Sheeana turned from the observation window. "I wasn't sure Duncan could ever return us to normal space, but now he's done so. Isn't that enough for now?"

"No! We must select a planet for our new Bene Gesserit headquarters, turn these worms loose, and convert it into a new Rakis. We must begin reproducing, building a new core for the Sisterhood." She rested her hands on narrow hips. "We cannot keep wandering forever."

"Three years is hardly forever. You are starting to sound like the Rabbi."

The younger woman looked as if uncertain whether to take the comment as a joke or a rebuke. "The Rabbi likes to complain. I think it comforts him. I was simply looking to our future."

"We will have a future, Garimi. Do not worry."

The aide's face brightened, turned hopeful. "Are you speaking from prescience?"

"No, from my faith."

Sheeana consumed more of their hoarded spice than most, a dose sufficient for her to map out vague and fog-shrouded paths ahead of them. During the

time that the Ithaca had been lost in the void, Sheeana had seen nothing, but since the recent unexpected lurch back into normal space, she had felt different . . . better.

The largest sandworm rose up in the cargo hold, its open maw like the mouth of a cave. The other worms stirred like a writhing nest of snakes. Two more heads emerged, and a powder of sand cascaded down.

Garimi gasped in awe. "Look, they can sense you, even up here."

"And I sense them." Sheeana placed her palms against the plaz barrier, imagining that she could smell the melange on their breath even through the walls. Neither she nor the worms would be satisfied until they had a new desert on which to roam.

But Duncan insisted they keep running to stay one step ahead of the hunters. Not everyone agreed with his plan, such as it was. Many aboard the ship had never wanted to come along on this journey in the first place: the Rabbi and his refugee Jews, the Tleilaxu Scytale, and the four bestial Futars.

And what about the worms?, she wondered. What do they truly want?

All seven worms had surfaced now, questing back and forth. A troubled look crossed Garimi's hardened face. "Do you think the Tyrant is really in there? A pearl of awareness in an endless dream? Can he sense that you are special?"

"Because I am his hundred-times-removed great grandniece? Maybe. Certainly no one on Rakis expected a little girl from an isolated desert village to be able to command the great worms."

The corrupt priesthood on Rakis had seen Sheeana as a link to their Divided God. Later, the Bene Gesserit's Missionaria Protectiva created legends about Sheeana, shaping her into an earth mother, a holy virgin. As far as the population of the Old Empire knew, their revered Sheeana had perished along with Rakis. A religion had grown up around her supposed martyrdom, becoming yet another weapon for the Sisterhood to use. They were undoubtedly still exploiting her name and legend.

"All of us believe in you, Sheeana. That is why we came on this --" Garimi caught herself, as if on the verge of uttering a deprecatory word, "-- on this odyssey."

Below, the worms dove beneath the mounded sand, where they tested the boundaries of the hold. Sheeana watched them in their restless motion, wondering how much they understood of their strange situation.

If Leto II was indeed inside those creatures, he must be having troubled dreams.