

had brought her with him on this trip back to where they had met.

Now, looking out at the calm Caladan seas and watching the boats return from a day of harvesting kelp and fat butterfish, Vor sat with his eager young adjutant, Abulurd Butler, youngest son of Quentin Vigar and Wandra Butler. Abulurd was also the grandson of Vor's close friend...but Xavier Harkonnen's name was rarely spoken, since he'd been irreversibly branded a coward and traitor to humanity. The thought of this injustice, carried forward by the momentum of legend, caught in Vor's throat like a spiny fruit, but he could do nothing about it. Nearly sixty years had already gone by.

He and Abulurd had found a table inside a new cliffside suspensor restaurant that moved slowly along the Caladan shore for a constantly shifting view of the coast and the sea. Their military caps rested on a wide window ledge. Waves crashed against large rocks just offshore and left rivulets of water running down the sides like white lace. Late afternoon sunlight glinted off the waves.

In their green-and-crimson uniforms, the two men gazed out at the incoming tide and drank wine, enjoying a brief respite from the unending Jihad. Vor wore his uniform casually, without all the distracting medals, while Abulurd himself seemed as crisp as the creases on his trousers. Just like his grandfather .

Vor had taken the young man under his wing, watching out for him, helping him along. Abulurd had never known his mother—Xavier's youngest daughter—who had suffered a severe stroke giving birth to him, which left her catatonic. Now, upon turning eighteen, the young man had pledged himself to the Army of the Jihad. His father and brothers had earned prestige and many decorations. Eventually, Quentin Butler's youngest son would distinguish himself as well.

To avoid the taint of the Harkonnen name, Abulurd's father had taken his surname from the auspicious maternal line, proud to claim the heritage of Serena Butler herself. Ever since he'd married into the famous family forty-two years earlier, the war hero Quentin had remarked on the irony of the name. "A butler was once a menial servant who quietly followed the orders of his master. But I declare a new family motto: 'We Butlers are servants unto no one!'" His two oldest sons Faykan and Rikov had adopted the catchphrase as they devoted their early lives to fight in the Jihad.

So much history in a name, Vor thought. And so much baggage with it .

Taking a long breath, he scanned the interior of the restaurant. A banner hung on one wall, with pictures of the Three Martyrs: Serena Butler, her innocent child Manion, and Grand Patriarch Ginjo. Faced with an enemy as relentless as the thinking machines, people sought rescue from God or His representatives. Like any religious movement, the "Martyrists" had zealous fringe members who followed strict practices to honor the fallen trio.

Vor did not adhere to such beliefs himself, preferring to rely on military prowess to defeat Omnium, but human nature, including fanaticism, had an influence on his planning. Populations that would not fight in the name of the League would throw themselves howling upon machine foes if asked to do so in the name of Serena or her baby. But while