

SAYDIN MAK DOOM

(The Pentarchy of Solarian: Book #1)

W. D. Worth

Copyright© 2020 by W.D.Worth

All rights reserved.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without express permission of the publisher.

Cover design by W.D.Worth

ISBN: 978-1-7770716-0-8 (Ebook)

FORWARD

Castle Mondragon
Hall of Scrolls

My dearest friend, the Reader:

On this, the fourteenth turn in the moon of leaves falling, in the 1001st cycle of post-Cloister, I, Kronus of Tsark, bid you greetings!

Upon my frail but willing shoulders has fallen the mantle of chronicler. I bear the responsibility of the office with pride and dignity, as is fitting. It is my fervent hope that I have fulfilled my duties with the diligence and devotion to the written word that is an inherent trait of my race.

Indeed, it was such skill that prompted the High Lords of the Pentarchy to appoint me First among those who record the Codex of the Empire. Even as a young adult of 154 cycles, I had already achieved fame among the brothers of my Septar. I should add

with all humility that I am a rarity among my kind...a Tsarkin with the heart and soul of a poet. Ever have I sought to weave the intangible web of thought into the concrete yet flowing imagery of the written word.

And yet, it was neither my talent for eloquence nor my professional fame that caused me to be chosen to unfold the following tale. It was rather the good luck to meet and befriend my lord Talisman, and the extreme good fortune to survive the amazing chain of events that unfolded after his miraculous appearance. It is he, the Lord of the Flame, who rightly bears responsibility for both authorship and causality.

And so I shall record it.

My friend, there is a philosophy espoused by countless intelligent minds among the far-flung reaches of the Pentarchy. Some attribute it to our own Robert the Piper and others to the great Norn himself. In my humble opinion, the true author has somehow escaped the entrapment of record. Regardless, one needs neither the imagination of a Robert nor the genius of a Norn to fathom its meaning. Detractors refer to it as quaint and oversimplified. As for myself, and indeed the great majority, there is a feeling of rightness about it. I will quote a brief passage from the text.

‘The endless flux of life may be likened to a river—called the Aether. It flows from the wellspring of the Source, permeating all planes, all dimensions. Each droplet of its precious substance is but a moment, which for living creatures seems to be in stasis for the blink of an eye. This moment is then thrust aside by the irresistible force of Creation. This momentum, this ‘Time’, is the binding fiber of the dyad of reality. These droplets are as equal

and limitless as the grains of cosmic dust that suffuse the Eld, yet as different as the three moons of Tsark. There are moments as rare as a blue sun, as precious as Kryll. There are some that touch only individual beings, and others so momentous they affect solar systems, galaxies...the known universe.

Such a one was the coming of the Norn.

And what better way to start a tale than that which is both beginning and end?

My friend, those of us who have imbibed the Serum of Longevity can only guess at the natural span of life. My lord Talisman has implied that some of us shall live to enter a new age, and I have learned not to doubt him. Yet what this might mean or how much of this time I shall see is uncertain. Nor is it important. I take my solace in the belief that the record of these moments shall endure.

For all those generations to follow...indeed, for all those friends on distant worlds who may read my words, I leave one final wish...

Enjoy!

Lord Kronus of Tsark

Sentinel of the Scrolls

High Warden of the Great Seal

First Chronicler of the Pentarchy of Solarian

PROLOGUE

THE COMING OF THE NORN

IT WAS THE year of our Lord, 2121. Twenty-one years earlier, mankind had once more sweated blood, dreading the supposed Apocalypse. The first century of the second millennium crept upward, teetered on its balance, and plummeted into the second. No trumpets of doom proclaimed its silent crashing.

The relieved population of Earth continued to march forward, and the five great econo-political zones drew ever closer in kinship. Their leaders formed a ruling body of equal number, the Council of Five, which ushered in an era of peace and prosperity unremembered in history.

Unshackled by the impotence of War, the quasi-god Science pooled the talents of humankind and the resources of Earth. The

quest for the Grail mysteries of Life and the Unknown galloped ahead unchecked.

Secure and flushed with the power of a dominant species, humanity thrust into space. With eager hands, they reached for the stars at long last within grasp.

It was then that it happened.

Flossy raced around Mother Earth, a young and sprightly daughter held by gravity's invisible hand. Creaking and groaning, her frustrated murmurs sank unheard into the dark silence of space. Her lunar sister rode in company, a crescent of ghostly silver silhouetted against the backdrop of Earth-glow.

Though made of filament and fiber, platelet and tubing, Flossy was alive and resounded with a multitude of breathy echoes. Five thousand inhabitants trampled her spacious halls, secure beneath her mottled skin of military-spec Everlar. Built with sweat and tempered by genius, she stretched out nearly two kilometers

Her less than feminine configuration was that of a wheel. Eight octopus arms radiated outward from a bulbous central dome, each clutching the haloed outer rim—a Saturn necklace pinpointed by jeweled lights. When viewed from Earth, they coalesced into a planet-bright orb, at once familiar and magical.

But a monster she was, even if a captivating one, with a swelling, cyclopean eye forever gazing into far-off realms. Some of these were so distant they had shed light billions of years

before the system of Sol had formed itself from a cloud of cosmic dust.

Fleet Observatory and Ships' Service Yard: that's what you called her if you wanted to be correct. Familiarity often shortened her name to the Yard or the Observatory. But to those in the Space Fleet, and to most of the human race, she was best known as Flossy.

Two male members of the Fleet were watching her at the moment, snug inside the cockpit of a Ferryman shuttle. Ten minutes before, they had crossed the lunar tangent. Since then, she had been growing like the proverbial mustard seed, from a candle flicker to a glowing giantess dominating their screen.

The younger of the two men stirred, dragging himself upright in his seat. His adrenaline-fed rush of euphoria was running a distant second place to his monumental hangover. Bloodshot eyes dipped to his chest where a set of gold-glittering wings burned warm and secure. There was no hint they had settled there only eight hours before. Fleet Ensign Hugo Norn was, at last, a reality.

A groan escaped his lips, alerting the shuttle's second occupant. The man had been lying sprawled in the pilot's chair, but now he turned and inspected Hugo with interest. His uniform jacket glowed with newness and draped across the backrest. A thick, gold band trimmed the hanging sleeves.

Fleet Commodore Midas Norn watched for a second longer and his wide mouth slipped into a grin. "Feeling almost human again, Junior?"

"Damn it, Midas!" Hugo groaned, rubbing his temples. His mouth was desert dry and his tongue felt like it had grown fur. He

had no idea how he'd managed to survive the 8G takeoff from Earth-side without puking. "Why did you wait so long to drag me away from that party?"

Midas shook his head and made a clucking sound. "What the hell are you bitching about, Junior? I would have thought you'd be rejoicing. Passing out from the Academy is a once in a lifetime deal. On second thought, you *did* do some serious rejoicing last night." Midas waved a finger in mock disapproval. "Overdo the dancing and prancing and you're bound to end up with sore feet...and head. Besides, as I recall, you were hardly in the leaving mode apart from slithering into a secluded room."

A colorful array of images loped across Hugo's mind. First was the grandeur of the passing out parade, re-enacted in its entire splendor and set against the backdrop of the Academy's looming towers. Then he was standing in ceremonial dress, receiving his commission from Richard Mondragon, Chairman of the Council of Five. After that had come the celebration, with copious quantities of alcohol and plenty of attractive coeds from the neighboring colleges. There had been one in particular, a gorgeous redhead with large, inviting hips and even larger...

"By the way, *Mister Norn*...that is hardly the way to address a senior officer, especially one who has attained the lofty level of flag rank."

Hugo cocked his head sideways, a movement that caused unpleasant side effects. The commodore's black eyes speared him in an icy stare that had no doubt frozen many an unfortunate ensign before him. It slid off Hugo like rain off a freshly waxed Ferrari.

“My apologies, Uncle Sir.” Hugo grinned and offered a half-hearted salute. Swiveling in his seat, he touched the light on the recessed cooler. *Rank did indeed have its privileges*, he thought, taking in the plush surroundings of the cockpit. It was the newest model off the line, fitted with enough customized extras to beggar a New York banker—not that Midas had to worry. The sleek ship was a gift from the council in honor of both Midas’ recent promotion and his official appointment to the newest and largest cruiser in the Fleet.

The cooler emitted a low bleep and the top flipped up, affording Hugo the sight of a six-pack of coke. A lucky choice since alcohol was the last thing on his mind. He reached in and grabbed one. Closing his eyes, he sighed as the ice-cold liquid burned its way down his gullet. *Still adds life even after all these years*. The age-old slogan drifted through his thoughts, sounding more than appropriate. “I’ll be all right after a shave and a shower,” he said, grinning through a loud belch. His uncle merely shook his head and sighed. *Probably thinks I’m a cocky young bastard*. He vividly remembered when the Fates had thrown them together. He had only been five years old, a time of the greatest sorrow for the Norn household.

Midas’ older brother, Egan, had been traveling on a commercial flight to a well-known Euro-Nordic ski resort, and his wife, Hugo’s mother, had been with him. The flight had crashed, killing all on board. Hugo had been staying with his grandparents and had remained there. Midas had been sixteen at the time and had assumed the role of an older brother rather than an uncle. The relationship had not changed, even when he’d left a couple of years later to enter the Academy.

Watching Midas now was like looking at an older version of himself. Each possessed the same cat-lean build and close-cropped, jet-black hair. The facial features, with their high and prominent bone structure, were striking rather than handsome, affording clear evidence of their native heritage. The obvious difference that set them apart was their eyes. Midas' were the night-black of his Arapaho mother, while Hugo had the cerulean blue of his Teutonic grandfather, Ludwig Von Norn.

"You know what?" Midas mused. "I just realized why I've never married. It's the horrifying possibility that I might sire an uncouth brat like you."

"Very funny," Hugo retorted, popping another coke. "I thought it was because you couldn't stay in one bed long enough."

Midas was saved from a fitting reply as the upper right quadrant of their screen changed to a swirling vortex of magenta, pulsing like a heartbeat. A soft, seductive voice floated through the cabin.

"Greetings, Commodore. We congratulate you on your promotion. It was long overdue."

"Thanks, Flossy," Midas replied. "The wheels of progress and those of the Fleet turn slowly—no pun intended."

Hugo could have sworn he heard the muted echo of laughter. The voice bore an indefinable lilt, instilling a vision of flowing hair teased by a Caribbean breeze and silken limbs dancing over platinum sands. He was about to speak but closed his mouth with an audible pop as Midas flashed him a wordless command.

"We have locked on, Commodore, and will guide you to the central docking facility."

“We have some last-minute cargo, Flossy. It would be better if we...”

“The elder Norn and various members of the Press are standing by. I have been instructed to deliver you immediately upon your arrival.”

“Belay that!” Midas ordered curtly. “No further communication until I say so!” He leaned back in his chair and a deep frown now furrowed his brow. “I suspected this might happen. The Old Man wouldn’t waste a photo opportunity as good as this one.”

“You and grandfather are still feuding, I take it,” Hugo said.

“No more than usual,” Midas grunted in reply. “As it happens, I *do* have some things to discuss with him in private. But not with those leeches around, sticking their virtsets in my face.”

Hugo had his own opinion but thought better about voicing it.

Midas deliberated a while longer then slapped his armrest with finality. “Flossy! Is Admiral Taylor among those waiting?”

“No, Commodore. He will arrive with Chairman Mondragon’s party tomorrow morning.”

Midas nodded to himself. A look of satisfaction had replaced the frown and Hugo could see the wheels turning. With the absence of the admiral commanding the Space Fleet, Midas was the ranking officer.

“That tears it!” Midas’ grin was wolfish. “Flossy, order all traffic to stand clear of S.E.Sector Lima. I’m going to make a brief, flyby inspection of my ship before landing.”

After only the briefest hesitation, the silken voice responded without inflection.

“As you command, Commodore.”

Hugo was watching the screen and he detected a subtle movement in the faceless pattern, like an eye shifting in its socket. He became aware of an uncomfortable tingling in his scalp and was sure he was being scanned. More than that, it was almost as if something was inside him. For all its intensity, the experience lasted only a second. Then it was like a switch had turned off.

Flossy’s physical mass now dominated the screen. In the brief interim she had grown even larger.

Midas fitted his palm into the curved depression on the console and a light-green aura sloped upward, reflecting off the cabin sole. “Computer! Disengage autohelm!”

The ship immediately yawed as Midas took control. The shuttle banked until the craft’s nose pointed toward the protruding underbelly of the station. The axis tilted until it became obvious something lay at rest underneath. It remained indistinct but gave the impression of being out of place—almost a deformity. The small cabin fairly crackled with the undercurrent of suppressed excitement.

“I’ve never heard a computer-generated vocal like *that* before.” Hugo’s comment carried the tone of a question rather than a statement. When he received no immediate answer, he added, “But I see the imprint of grandfather’s hand all over it.”

“My, aren’t we astute?” Midas drawled, not taking his eyes off the screen. “The Old Man’s been busy all right. With what, I’m not too sure. Whatever it is...whatever *she* is went online six

months ago, right about the time Daedalus Falken honored us with a visit.”

Hugo noticed his uncle’s side-glance and could not disguise his loathing.

“It may be just a coincidence,” Midas added without much force.

Hugo shook his head. “An ILF,” he murmured, his thoughts warring between disgust and incredulity. Integrated life form: part human and part machine, so intricately enmeshed it was difficult to tell where one began and the other left off.

“Now that you’ve mentioned the *word*, it’s probably true.” Midas shrugged and shook his head. “The security in the dome is level fourteen, almost too rich even for a commodore. I may not be in the same brain class as you or pop, but I’m not slow either. No one has told me, but I’m pretty sure Falken is involved.”

When Hugo raised his eyebrows, his uncle expounded.

“In my opinion, Daedalus Falken is criminally insane. Even so, he’s the recognized guru of the Genetic Engineering clique. And he’s also the darling of both the Southern Hispanics and the Eastern Bloc. Their support in council is crucial if we’re to keep getting the funding we need for this project.”

Midas reached over and squeezed Hugo’s shoulder. “I’m not saying I condone everything going on up here, Junior, but I have to divorce myself from moral issues. I’ve got too many other things to deal with.” His voice became harsher. “We’re not going to conquer space by being pussies, are we? Or bleeding hearts.”

When Hugo offered no comment his voice roughened further. “I can almost hear your mind working. How could the Old Man allow it? Well, boyo, you should have figured out by now

that Herr Von Norn—and the chairman too—will do whatever it takes to make this work, even if it means getting into bed with a degenerate like Falken. And so will I, Goddamit!”

Midas finally clamped his mouth shut. Hugo would never admit it, but his uncle had sounded like an irate lecturer at the Academy. He waited a moment longer and Midas turned, giving him a forced grin.

“Anyway, Junior, what the hell? Flossy didn’t sound like a monster, did she?”

“Well, no,” Hugo admitted, “quite the opposite.” He decided not to mention the intense feeling that had assailed him. His uncle was right, of course. People like Falken would always be a part of the system. And leaders—no matter how noble—would use the fruit of their labors in spite of how warped or perverted their ideals might be.

“To be honest, I’m a little surprised you didn’t know about the situation up here,” Midas added. “You and pop usually compare notes on everything.”

“Up to a point,” Hugo agreed. “He’s kept me current on construction details...those related to my design specs in particular. Still, we haven’t met or spoken more than token greetings since I entered the Academy. Not even at grandma’s funeral last year.” He stared at his uncle. “You of all people should remember the deal since you’re the only surviving witness.”

“You agreed to serve a ten-year apprenticeship under the Old Man, and then he had to let you graduate from the Academy. No interference, right?”

“Right...” Hugo answered cautiously.

“And afterward? You make any deals regarding the future?”

“What are you talking about?” Hugo had a most uncomfortable feeling of Déjà vu that relegated his hangover and the unsavory topic of Falken to a distant second and third place. “I’m a serving officer now...”

“There she is,” Midas interrupted.

The rim of the Observatory had crept up on them unnoticed. There were no more obstructions and the deformity had become a ship. She hung beneath the dome structure, suspended by a complex web of flex-pipe. She could have been a spider awaiting the arrival of her prey or the captured insect itself. Her name was the *North Star*, and she was the third and latest of the Jupiter-Class Cruisers.

She stretched out half the diameter of the Observatory, yet for all her size she was a thing of symmetry and beauty. The bow was thickly armored and swept outward like the hooded cowl of a bird of prey. From the great ridges of back and belly, tapered wings flowed in a reverse curve, each housing a massive engine. A third formed the fluted tail. All could tilt up to ninety degrees on their axes. She *was* a bird of prey, from shadowed slate gray to darkest ebony. Soon, like her sisters *Ulysses* and *Peregrine* before her, she would fly to the newest and furthestmost colony of mankind: Jupiter Station.

The tiny shuttle continued to hover and the two men inside felt as insignificant as gnats buzzing an elephant’s head. They watched as a blue arc traced its way along the port wing, where a honeycombed area of scaffolding remained. A dismantling crew of drones scurried like fireflies around it, and thin plumes of

jetpack exhaust trailed intricate patterns as they ducked and dodged at their work.

“Damn me if she isn’t the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen!” Midas swore with pride—the kind only a captain can feel for his ship. “The umbilical tethers are due to be cast off at 1300 hours tomorrow. She’ll have power by then and we should get underway by 0800 the following morning.”

“Accompanied by champagne and fanfare, no doubt,” Hugo quipped.

“Exactly,” agreed Midas. His lips twisted into a wry smile. “The council and their entourage will be on board by then for the Earth circumnavigation. But my number one will have to kiss their collective asses. I’ll be in engineering with the chief, monitoring data readouts.”

“You expect problems?” Hugo asked with a note of concern.

“A good commander anticipates...he doesn’t expect anything. This is our maiden run, so I’m keeping a weather eye open.” Midas raised his eyebrows. “Of course, there shouldn’t be any problems, *Dr. Norn*, assuming that your design specifications are without flaw.”

“You have my guarantee,” Hugo assured. “That’s assuming that your engineers built it right. Modifications to the reactor will bump performance by forty percent...and that’s a conservative estimate. The *Ulysses* spent fourteen months getting to Ganymede, and the *Peregrine’s* voyage will be about the same. The *North Star* should do it in a little over eight.”

Midas whistled. “That’s great news, Junior. But to tell you the truth, I’m not worried at all about this voyage since *you’ll* be there to sort out any screw-ups.”

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

