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Dune  
Frank Herbert

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Book 1  
DUNE

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A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct. This every sister of the Bene Gesserit knows. To begin your study of the life of Muad'Dib, then, take care that you first place him in his time: born in the 57th year of the Padishah Emperor, Shaddam IV. And take the most special care that you locate Muad'Dib in his place: the planet Arrakis. Do not be deceived by the fact that he was born on Caladan and lived his first fifteen years there. Arrakis, the planet known as Dune, is forever his place.  
-from "Manual of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan

In the week before their departure to Arrakis, when all the final scurrying about had reached a nearly unbearable frenzy, an old crone came to visit the mother of the boy, Paul.

It was a warm night at Castle Caladan, and the ancient pile of stone that had served the Atreides family as home for twenty-six generations bore that cooled-sweat feeling it acquired before a change in the weather.

The old woman was let in by the side door down the vaulted passage by Paul's room and she was allowed a moment to peer in at him where he lay in his bed.

By the half-light of a suspensor lamp, dimmed and hanging near the floor, the awakened boy could see a bulky female shape at his door, standing one step ahead of his mother. The old woman was a witch shadow -- hair like matted spiderwebs, hooded 'round darkness of features, eyes like glittering jewels.

"Is he not small for his age, Jessica?" the old woman asked. Her voice wheezed and twanged like an untuned baliset.

Paul's mother answered in her soft contralto: "The Atreides are known to start late getting their growth, Your Reverence."

"So I've heard, so I've heard," wheezed the old woman. "Yet he's already fifteen."

"Yes, Your Reverence."

"He's awake and listening to us," said the old woman. "Sly little rascal." She chuckled. "But royalty has need of slyness. And if he's really the Kwisatz Haderach . . . well . . ."

Within the shadows of his bed, Paul held his eyes open to mere slits. Two bird-bright ovals -- the eyes of the old woman -- seemed to expand and glow as they stared into his.

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"Sleep well, you sly little rascal," said the old woman. "Tomorrow you'll need all your faculties to meet my gom jabbar."

And she was gone, pushing his mother out, closing the door with a solid thump.

Paul lay awake wondering: What's a gom jabbar?

In all the upset during this time of change, the old woman was the strangest thing he had seen.

Your Reverence.

And the way she called his mother Jessica like a common serving wench instead of what she was -- a Bene Gesserit Lady, a duke's concubine and mother of the ducal heir.

Is a gom jabbar something of Arrakis I must know before we go there? he wondered.

He mouthed her strange words: Gom jabbar . . . Kwisatz Haderach.

There had been so many things to learn. Arrakis would be a place so different from Caladan that Paul's mind whirled with the new knowledge. Arrakis -- Dune -- Desert Planet.

Thufir Hawat, his father's Master of Assassins, had explained it: their mortal enemies, the Harkonnens, had been on Arrakis eighty years, holding the planet in quasi-fief under a CHOAM Company contract to mine the geriatric spice, melange. Now the Harkonnens were leaving to be replaced by the House of Atreides in fief-complete -- an apparent victory for the Duke Leto. Yet, Hawat had said, this appearance contained the deadliest peril, for the Duke Leto was popular among the Great Houses of the Landsraad.

"A popular man arouses the jealousy of the powerful," Hawat had said.

Arrakis -- Dune -- Desert Planet.

Paul fell asleep to dream of an Arrakeen cavern, silent people all around him moving in the dim light of glowglobes. It was solemn there and like a cathedral as he listened to a faint sound -- the drip-drip-drip of water. Even while he remained in the dream, Paul knew he would remember it upon awakening. He always remembered the dreams that were predictions.

The dream faded.

Paul awoke to feel himself in the warmth of his bed -- thinking . . . thinking. This world of Castle Caladan, without play or companions his own age, perhaps did not deserve sadness in farewell. Dr. Yueh, his teacher, had hinted that the faufreluches class system was not rigidly guarded on Arrakis. The planet sheltered people who lived at the desert edge without caid or bashar to command them: will-o'-the-sand people called Fremmen, marked down on no census of the Imperial Regate.

Arrakis -- Dune -- Desert Planet.

Paul sensed his own tensions, decided to practice one of the mind-body lessons his mother had taught him. Three quick breaths triggered the responses: he fell into the floating awareness . . . focusing the consciousness . . . aortal dilation . . . avoiding the unfocused mechanism of consciousness . . . to be conscious by choice . . . blood enriched and swift-flooding the overload regions . . . one does not obtain food-safety-freedom by instinct alone . . . animal consciousness does not extend beyond the given moment nor into the idea that its victims may become extinct . . . the animal destroys and does not produce . . . animal pleasures remain close to sensation levels and avoid the perceptual . . . the human requires a background grid through which to see his universe . . . focused consciousness by choice, this forms your grid . . . bodily integrity follows nerve-blood flow according to the deepest awareness of cell needs . . . all things/cells/beings are impermanent . . . strive for flow-permanence within . . .

Over and over and over within Paul's floating awareness the lesson rolled.

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When dawn touched Paul's window sill with yellow light, he sensed it through closed eyelids, opened them, hearing then the renewed bustle and hurry in the castle, seeing the familiar patterned beams of his bedroom ceiling.

The hall door opened and his mother peered in, hair like shaded bronze held with a black ribbon at the crown, her oval face emotionless and green eyes staring solemnly.

"You're awake," she said. "Did you sleep well?"

"Yes."

He studied the tallness of her, saw the hint of tension in her shoulders as she chose clothing for him from the closet racks. Another might have missed the tension, but she had trained him in the Bene Gesserit Way -- in the minutiae of observation. She turned, holding a semiformal jacket for him. It carried the red Atreides hawk crest above the breast pocket.

"Hurry and dress," she said. "Reverend Mother is waiting."

"I dreamed of her once," Paul said. "Who is she?"

"She was my teacher at the Bene Gesserit school. Now, she's the Emperor's Truthsayer. And Paul . . ." She hesitated. "You must tell her about your dreams."

"I will. Is she the reason we got Arrakis?"

"We did not get Arrakis." Jessica flicked dust from a pair of trousers, hung them with the jacket on the dressing stand beside his bed. "Don't keep Reverend Mother waiting."

Paul sat up, hugged his knees. "What's a gom jabbar?"

Again, the training she had given him exposed her almost invisible hesitation, a nervous betrayal he felt as fear.

Jessica crossed to the window, flung wide the draperies, stared across the river orchards toward Mount Syubi. "You'll learn about . . . the gom jabbar soon enough," she said.

He heard the fear in her voice and wondered at it.

Jessica spoke without turning. "Reverend Mother is waiting in my morning room. Please hurry."

The Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam sat in a tapestried chair watching mother and son approach. Windows on each side of her overlooked the curving southern bend of the river and the green farmlands of the Atreides family holding, but the Reverend Mother ignored the view. She was feeling her age this morning, more than a little petulant. She blamed it on space travel and association with that abominable Spacing Guild and its secretive ways. But here was a mission that required personal attention from a Bene Gesserit-with-the-Sight. Even the Padishah Emperor's Truthsayer couldn't evade that responsibility when the duty call came.

Damn that Jessica! the Reverend Mother thought. If only she 'd borne us a girl as she was ordered to do!

Jessica stopped three paces from the chair, dropped a small curtsy, a gentle flick of left hand along the line of her skirt. Paul gave the short bow his dancing master had taught -- the one used "when in doubt of another's station."

The nuances of Paul's greeting were not lost on the Reverend Mother. She said: "He's a cautious one, Jessica."

Jessica's hand went to Paul's shoulder, tightened there. For a heartbeat, fear pulsed through her palm. Then she had herself under control. "Thus he has been taught, Your Reverence."

What does she fear? Paul wondered.

The old woman studied Paul in one gestalten flicker: face oval like Jessica's, but strong bones . . . hair: the Duke's black-black but with browline of the maternal grandfather who cannot be named, and that thin, disdainful nose; shape of directly staring green eyes: like the old Duke, the paternal grandfather who is dead.

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Now, there was a man who appreciated the power of bravura -- even in death, the Reverend Mother thought.

"Teaching is one thing," she said, "the basic ingredient is another. We shall see." The old eyes darted a hard glance at Jessica. "Leave us. I enjoin you to practice the meditation of peace."

Jessica took her hand from Paul's shoulder. "Your Reverence, I --"

"Jessica, you know it must be done."

Paul looked up at his mother, puzzled.

Jessica straightened. "Yes . . . of course."

Paul looked back at the Reverend Mother. Politeness and his mother's obvious awe of this old woman argued caution. Yet he felt an angry apprehension at the fear he sensed radiating from his mother.

"Paul . . ." Jessica took a deep breath. ". . . this test you're about to receive . . . it's important to me."

"Test?" He looked up at her.

"Remember that you're a duke's son," Jessica said. She whirled and strode from the room in a dry swishing of skirt. The door closed solidly behind her.

Paul faced the old woman, holding anger in check. "Does one dismiss the Lady Jessica as though she were a serving wench?"

A smile flicked the corners of the wrinkled old mouth. "The Lady Jessica was my serving wench, lad, for fourteen years at school." She nodded. "And a good one, too. Now, you come here!"

The command whipped out at him. Paul found himself obeying before he could think about it. Using the Voice on me, he thought. He stopped at her gesture, standing beside her knees.

"See this?" she asked. From the folds of her gown, she lifted a green metal cube about fifteen centimeters on a side. She turned it and Paul saw that one side was open -- black and oddly frightening. No light penetrated that open blackness.

"Put your right hand in the box," she said.

Fear shot through Paul. He started to back away, but the old woman said: "Is this how you obey your mother?"

He looked up into bird-bright eyes.

Slowly, feeling the compulsions and unable to inhibit them, Paul put his hand into the box. He felt first a sense of cold as the blackness closed around his hand, then slick metal against his fingers and a prickling as though his hand were asleep.

A predatory look filled the old woman's features. She lifted her right hand away from the box and poised the hand close to the side of Paul's neck. He saw a glint of metal there and started to turn toward

"Stop!" she snapped.

Using the Voice again! He swung his attention back to her face.

"I hold at your neck the gom jabbar," she said. "The gom jabbar, the high-handed enemy. It's a needle with a drop of poison on its tip. Ah-ah! Don't pull away or you'll feel that poison."

Paul tried to swallow in a dry throat. He could not take his attention from the seamed old face, the glistening eyes, the pale gums around silvery metal teeth that flashed as she spoke.

"A duke's son must know about poisons," she said. "It's the way of our times, eh? Musky, to be poisoned in your drink. Aumas, to be poisoned in your food. The quick ones and the slow ones and the ones in between. Here's a new one for you: the gom jabbar. It kills only animals."

Pride overcame Paul's fear. "You dare suggest a duke's son is an animal?" he demanded.

"Let us say I suggest you may be human," she said. "Steady! I warn you not to try jerking away. I am old, but my hand can drive this needle into your neck before you escape me."

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"Who are you?" he whispered. "How did you trick my mother into leaving me alone with you? Are you from the Harkonnens?"

"The Harkonnens? Bless us, no! Now, be silent." A dry finger touched his neck and he stilled the involuntary urge to leap away.

"Good," she said. "You pass the first test. Now, here's the way of the rest of it: If you withdraw your hand from the box you die. This is the only rule. Keep your hand in the box and live. Withdraw it and die."

Paul took a deep breath to still his trembling. "If I call out there'll be servants on you in seconds and you'll die."

"Servants will not pass your mother who stands guard outside that door. Depend on it. Your mother survived this test. Now it's your turn. Be honored. We seldom administer this to men-children."

Curiosity reduced Paul's fear to a manageable level. He heard truth in the old woman's voice, no denying it. If his mother stood guard out there . . . if this were truly a test . . . And whatever it was, he knew himself caught in it, trapped by that hand at his neck: the gom jabbar. He recalled the response from the Litany against Fear as his mother had taught him out of the Bene Gesserit rite.

"I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain."

He felt calmness return, said: "Get on with it, old woman."

"Old woman!" she snapped. "You've courage, and that can't be denied. Well, we shall see, sirra." She bent close, lowered her voice almost to a whisper. "You will feel pain in this hand within the box. Pain. But! Withdraw the hand and I'll touch your neck with my gom jabbar -- the death so swift it's like the fall of the headsman's axe. Withdraw your hand and the gom jabbar takes you. Understand?"

"What's in the box?"

"Pain."

He felt increased tingling in his hand, pressed his lips tightly together. How could this be a test? he wondered. The tingling became an itch.

The old woman said; "You've heard of animals chewing off a leg to escape a trap? There's an animal kind of trick. A human would remain in the trap, endure the pain, feigning death that he might kill the trapper and remove a threat to his kind."

The itch became the faintest burning. "Why are you doing this?" he demanded.

"To determine if you're human. Be silent."

Paul clenched his left hand into a fist as the burning sensation increased in the other hand. It mounted slowly: heat upon heat upon heat . . . upon heat. He felt the fingernails of his free hand biting the palm. He tried to flex the fingers of the burning hand, but couldn't move them.

"It burns," he whispered.

"Silence!"

Pain throbbled up his arm. Sweat stood out on his forehead. Every fiber cried out to withdraw the hand from that burning pit . . . but . . . the gom jabbar. Without turning his head, he tried to move his eyes to see that terrible needle poised beside his neck. He sensed that he was breathing in gasps, tried to slow his breaths and couldn't.

Pain!

His world emptied of everything except that hand immersed in agony, the ancient face inches away staring at him.

His lips were so dry he had difficulty separating them.

The burning! The burning!

He thought he could feel skin curling black on that agonized hand, the flesh crisping and dropping away until only charred bones remained.

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It stopped!

As though a switch had been turned off, the pain stopped.

Paul felt his right arm trembling, felt sweat bathing his body.

"Enough," the old woman muttered. "Kull wahad! No woman child ever withstood that much. I must've wanted you to fail." She leaned back, withdrawing the gom jabbar from the side of his neck. "Take your hand from the box, young human, and look at it."

He fought down an aching shiver, stared at the lightless void where his hand seemed to remain of its own volition. Memory of pain inhibited every movement. Reason told him he would withdraw a blackened stump from that box.

"Do it!" she snapped.

He jerked his hand from the box, stared at it astonished. Not a mark. No sign of agony on the flesh. He held up the hand, turned it, flexed the fingers.

"Pain by nerve induction," she said. "Can't go around maiming potential humans. There're those who'd give a pretty for the secret of this box, though." She slipped it into the folds of her gown.

"But the pain --" he said.

"Pain," she sniffed. "A human can override any nerve in the body."

Paul felt his left hand aching, uncurled the clenched fingers, looked at four bloody marks where fingernails had bitten his palm. He dropped the hand to his side, looked at the old woman. "You did that to my mother once?"

"Ever sift sand through a screen?" she asked.

The tangential slash of her question shocked his mind into a higher awareness: Sand through a screen, he nodded.

"We Bene Gesserit sift people to find the humans."

He lifted his right hand, willing the memory of the pain. "And that's all there is to it -- pain?"

"I observed you in pain, lad. Pain's merely the axis of the test. Your mother's told you about our ways of observing. I see the signs of her teaching in you. Our test is crisis and observation."

He heard the confirmation in her voice, said: "It's truth!"

She stared at him. He senses truth! Could he be the one? Could he truly be the one? She extinguished the excitement, reminding herself: "Hope clouds observation."

"You know when people believe what they say," she said.

"I know it."

The harmonics of ability confirmed by repeated test were in his voice. She heard them, said: "Perhaps you are the Kwisatz Haderach. Sit down, little brother, here at my feet."

"I prefer to stand."

"Your mother sat at my feet once."

"I'm not my mother."

"You hate us a little, eh?" She looked toward the door, called out: "Jessica!"

The door flew open and Jessica stood there staring hard-eyed into the room. Hardness melted from her as she saw Paul. She managed a faint smile.

"Jessica, have you ever stopped hating me?" the old woman asked.

"I both love and hate you," Jessica said. "The hate -- that's from pains I must never forget. The love -- that's . . ."

"Just the basic fact," the old woman said, but her voice was gentle. "You may come in now, but remain silent. Close that door and mind it that no one interrupts us."

Jessica stepped into the room, closed the door and stood with her back to it. My son lives, she thought. My son lives and is . . . human. I knew he was . . . but . . . he lives. Now, I can go on living. The door felt hard and real against her back. Everything in the room was immediate and pressing against her senses.

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My son lives.

Paul looked at his mother. She told the truth. He wanted to get away alone and think this experience through, but knew he could not leave until he was dismissed. The old woman had gained a power over him. They spoke truth. His mother had undergone this test. There must be terrible purpose in it . . . the pain and fear had been terrible. He understood terrible purposes. They drove against all odds. They were their own necessity. Paul felt that he had been infected with terrible purpose. He did not know yet what the terrible purpose was.

"Some day, lad," the old woman said, "you, too, may have to stand outside a door like that. It takes a measure of doing."

Paul looked down at the hand that had known pain, then up to the Reverend Mother. The sound of her voice had contained a difference then from any other voice in his experience. The words were outlined in brilliance. There was an edge to them. He felt that any question he might ask her would bring an answer that could lift him out of his flesh-world into something greater.

"Why do you test for humans?" he asked.

"To set you free."

"Free?"

"Once men turned their thinking over to machines in the hope that this would set them free. But that only permitted other men with machines to enslave them."

" 'Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a man's mind,' " Paul quoted.

"Right out of the Butlerian Jihad and the Orange Catholic Bible," she said. "But what the O.C. Bible should've said is: 'Thou shalt not make a machine to counterfeit a human mind.' Have you studied the Mentat in your service?"

"I've studied with Thufir Hawat."

"The Great Revolt took away a crutch," she said. "It forced human minds to develop. Schools were started to train human talents. "

"Bene Gesserit schools?"

She nodded. "We have two chief survivors of those ancient schools: the Bene Gesserit and the Spacing Guild. The Guild, so we think, emphasizes almost pure mathematics. Bene Gesserit performs another function."

"Politics," he said.

"Kull wahad!" the old woman said. She sent a hard glance at Jessica.

"I've not told him. Your Reverence," Jessica said.

The Reverend Mother returned her attention to Paul. "You did that on remarkably few clues," she said. "Politics indeed. The original Bene Gesserit school was directed by those who saw the need of a thread of continuity in human affairs. They saw there could be no such continuity without separating human stock from animal stock -- for breeding purposes."

The old woman's words abruptly lost their special sharpness for Paul. He felt an offense against what his mother called his instinct for rightness. It wasn't that Reverend Mother lied to him. She obviously believed what she said. It was something deeper, something tied to his terrible purpose.

He said: "But my mother tells me many Bene Gesserit of the schools don't know their ancestry."

"The genetic lines are always in our records," she said. "Your mother knows that either she's of Bene Gesserit descent or her stock was acceptable in itself."

"Then why couldn't she know who her parents are?"

"Some do . . . Many don't. We might, for example, have wanted to breed her to a close relative to set up a dominant in some genetic trait. We have many reasons."

Again, Paul felt the offense against rightness. He said: "You take a lot on yourselves."



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The Reverend Mother stared at him, wondering: Did I hear criticism in his voice? "We carry a heavy burden," she said.

Paul felt himself coming more and more out of the shock of the test. He leveled a measuring stare at her, said: "You say maybe I'm the . . . Kwisatz Haderach. What's that, a human gom jabbar?"

"Paul," Jessica said. "You mustn't take that tone with --"

"I'll handle this, Jessica," the old woman said. "Now, lad, do you know about the Truthsayer drug?"

"You take it to improve your ability to detect falsehood," he said. "My mother's told me."

"Have you ever seen truthtrance?"

He shook his head. "No."

"The drug's dangerous," she said, "but it gives insight. When a Truthsayer's gifted by the drug, she can look many places in her memory -- in her body's memory. We look down so many avenues of the past . . . but only feminine avenues." Her voice took on a note of sadness. "Yet, there's a place where no Truthsayer can see. We are repelled by it, terrorized. It is said a man will come one day and find in the gift of the drug his inward eye. He will look where we cannot -- into both feminine and masculine pasts."

"Your Kwisatz Haderach?"

"Yes, the one who can be many places at once: the Kwisatz Haderach. Many men have tried the drug . . . so many, but none has succeeded."

"They tried and failed, all of them?"

"Oh, no." She shook her head. "They tried and died."

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To attempt an understanding of Muad'Dib without understanding his mortal enemies, the Harkonnens, is to attempt seeing Truth without knowing Falsehood. It is the attempt to see the Light without knowing Darkness. It cannot be.  
-from "Manual of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan

It was a relief globe of a world, partly in shadows, spinning under the impetus of a fat hand that glittered with rings. The globe sat on a freeform stand at one wall of a windowless room whose other walls presented a patchwork of multicolored scrolls, filmbooks, tapes and reels. Light glowed in the room from golden balls hanging in mobile suspensor fields.

An ellipsoid desk with a top of jade-pink petrified elacca wood stood at the center of the room. Veriform suspensor chairs ringed it, two of them occupied. In one sat a dark-haired youth of about sixteen years, round of face and with sullen eyes. The other held a slender, short man with effeminate face.

Both youth and man stared at the globe and the man half-hidden in shadows spinning it.

A chuckle sounded beside the globe. A basso voice rumbled out of the chuckle: "There it is, Piter -- the biggest mantrap in all history. And the Duke's headed into its jaws. Is it not a magnificent thing that I, the Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, do?"

"Assuredly, Baron," said the man. His voice came out tenor with a sweet, musical quality.

The fat hand descended onto the globe, stopped the spinning. Now, all eyes in the room could focus on the motionless surface and see that it was the kind of globe made for wealthy collectors or planetary governors of the Empire. It had the stamp of Imperial handicraft about it. Latitude and longitude lines were laid in with hair-fine platinum wire. The polar caps were insets of finest cloud-milk diamonds.

The fat hand moved, tracing details on the surface. "I invite you to observe," the basso voice rumbled. "Observe closely, Piter, and you, too, Feyd-

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Rautha, my darling: from sixty degrees north to seventy degrees south -- these exquisite ripples. Their coloring: does it not remind you of sweet caramels? And nowhere do you see blue of lakes or rivers or seas. And these lovely polar caps -- so small. Could anyone mistake this place? Arrakis! Truly unique. A superb setting for a unique Victory."

A smile touched Piter's lips. "And to think. Baron: the Padishah Emperor believes he's given the Duke your spice planet. How poignant."

"That's a nonsensical statement," the Baron rumbled. "You say this to confuse young Feyd-Rautha, but it is not necessary to confuse my nephew."

The sullen-faced youth stirred in his chair, smoothed a wrinkle in the black leotards he wore. He sat upright as a discreet tapping sounded at the door in the wall behind him.

Piter unfolded from his chair, crossed to the door, cracked it wide enough to accept a message cylinder. He closed the door, unrolled the cylinder and scanned it. A chuckle sounded from him. Another.

"Well?" the Baron demanded.

"The fool answered us, Baron!"

"Whenever did an Atreides refuse the opportunity for a gesture?" the Baron asked. "Well, what does he say?"

"He's most uncouth, Baron. Addresses you as 'Harkonnen' -- no 'Sire et Cher Cousin,' no title, nothing."

"It's a good name," the Baron growled, and his voice betrayed his impatience. "What does dear Leto say?"

"He says: 'Your offer of a meeting is refused. I have ofttimes met your treachery and this all men know.' "

"And?" the Baron asked.

"He says: 'The art of kanly still has admirers in the Empire.' He signs it: 'Duke Leto of Arrakis.' " Piter began to laugh. "Of Arrakis! Oh, my! This is almost too rich!"

"Be silent, Piter," the Baron said, and the laughter stopped as though shut off with a switch. "Kanly, is it?" the Baron asked. "Vendetta, heh? And he uses the nice old word so rich in tradition to be sure I know he means it."

"You made the peace gesture," Piter said. "The forms have been obeyed."

"For a Mentat, you talk too much, Piter," the Baron said. And he thought: I must do away with that one soon. He has almost outlived his usefulness. The Baron stared across the room at his Mental assassin, seeing the feature about him that most people noticed first: the eyes, the shaded slits of blue within blue, the eyes without any white in them at all.

A grin flashed across Piter's face. It was like a mask grimace beneath those eyes like holes. "But, Baron! Never has revenge been more beautiful. It is to see a plan of the most exquisite treachery: to make Leto exchange Caladan for Dune -- and without alternative because the Emperor orders it. How waggish of you!"

In a cold voice, the Baron said: "You have a flux of the mouth, Piter."

"But I am happy, my Baron. Whereas you . . . you are touched by jealousy."

"Piter!"

"Ah-ah. Baron! Is it not regrettable you were unable to devise this delicious scheme by yourself?"

"Someday I will have you strangled, Piter."

"Of a certainty, Baron. Enfin! But a kind act is never lost, eh?"

"Have you been chewing verite or semuta, Piter?"

"Truth without fear surprises the Baron," Piter said. His face drew down into a caricature of a frowning mask. "Ah, hah! But you see, Baron, I know as a Mentat when you will send the executioner. You will hold back just so long as I am useful. To move sooner would be wasteful and I'm yet of much use. I know what it is you learned from that lovely Dune planet -- waste not. True, Baron?"

The Baron continued to stare at Piter.

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Feyd-Rautha squirmed in his chair. These wrangling fools! he thought. My uncle cannot talk to his Mental without arguing. Do they think I've nothing to do except listen their arguments?

"Feyd," the Baron said. "I told you to listen and learn when I invited you in here. Are you learning?"

"Yes, Uncle." the voice was carefully subservient.

"Sometimes I wonder about Piter," the Baron said. "I cause pain out of necessity, but he . . . I swear he takes a positive delight in it. For myself, I can feel pity toward the poor Duke Leto. Dr. Yueh will move against him soon, and that'll be the end of all the Atreides. But surely Leto will know whose hand directed the pliant doctor . . . and knowing that will be a terrible thing."

"Then why haven't you directed the doctor to slip a kindjal between his ribs quietly and efficiently?" Piter asked. "You talk of pity, but --"

"The Duke must know when I encompass his doom," the Baron said. "And the other Great Houses must learn of it. The knowledge will give them pause. I'll gain a bit more room to maneuver. The necessity is obvious, but I don't have to like it."

"Room to maneuver," Piter sneered. "Already you have the Emperor's eyes on you, Baron. You move too boldly. One day the Emperor will send a legion or two of his Sardaukar down here onto Giedi Prime and that'll be an end to the Baron Vladimir Harkonnen."

"You'd like to see that, wouldn't you, Piter?" the Baron asked. "You'd enjoy seeing the Corps of Sardaukar pillage through my cities and sack this castle. You'd truly enjoy that."

"Does the Baron need to ask?" Piter whispered.

"You should've been a Bashar of the Corps," the Baron said. "You're too interested in blood and pain. Perhaps I was too quick with my promise of the spoils of Arrakis."

Piter took five curiously mincing steps into the room, stopped directly behind Feyd-Rautha. There was a tight air of tension in the room, and the youth looked up at Piter with a worried frown.

"Do not toy with Piter, Baron," Piter said. "You promised me the Lady Jessica. You promised her to me."

"For what, Piter?" the Baron asked. "For pain?"

Piter stared at him, dragging out the silence.

Feyd-Rautha moved his suspensor chair to one side, said: "Uncle, do I have to stay? You said you'd --"

"My darling Feyd-Rautha grows impatient," the Baron said. He moved within the shadows beside the globe. "Patience, Feyd." And he turned his attention back to the Mentat. "What of the Dukeling, the child Paul, my dear Piter?"

"The trap will bring him to you, Baron," Piter muttered.

"That's not my question," the Baron said. "You'll recall that you predicted the Bene Gesserit witch would bear a daughter to the Duke. You were wrong, eh, Mentat?"

"I'm not often wrong, Baron," Piter said, and for the first time there was fear in his voice. "Give me that: I'm not often wrong. And you know yourself these Bene Gesserit bear mostly daughters. Even the Emperor's consort had produced only females."

"Uncle," said Feyd-Rautha, "you said there'd be something important here for me to --"

"Listen to my nephew," the Baron said. "He aspires to rule my Barony, yet he cannot rule himself." The Baron stirred beside the globe, a shadow among shadows. "Well then, Feyd-Rautha Harkonnen, I summoned you here hoping to teach you a bit of wisdom. Have you observed our good Mentat? You should've learned something from this exchange."

"But, Uncle --"

"A most efficient Mentat, Piter, wouldn't you say, Feyd?"

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"Yes, but --"

"Ah! Indeed but! But he consumes too much spice, eats it like candy. Look at his eyes! He might've come directly from the Arrakeen labor pool. Efficient, Piter, but he's still emotional and prone to passionate outbursts. Efficient, Piter, but he still can err."

Piter spoke in a low, sullen tone: "Did you call me in here to impair my efficiency with criticism, Baron?"

"Impair your efficiency? You know me better, Piter. I wish only for my nephew to understand the limitations of a Mentat."

"Are you already training my replacement?" Piter demanded.

"Replace you? Why, Piter, where could I find another Mentat with your cunning and venom?"

"The same place you found me, Baron."

"Perhaps I should at that," the Baron mused. "You do seem a bit unstable lately. And the spice you eat!"

"Are my pleasures too expensive, Baron? Do you object to them?"

"My dear Piter, your pleasures are what tie you to me. How could I object to that? I merely wish my nephew to observe this about you."

"Then I'm on display," Piter said. "Shall I dance? Shall I perform my various functions for the eminent Feyd-Rau-"

"Precisely," the Baron said. "You are on display. Now, be silent." He glanced at Feyd-Rautha, noting his nephew's lips, the full and pouting look of them, the Harkonnen genetic marker, now twisted slightly in amusement. "This is a Mentat, Feyd. It has been trained and conditioned to perform certain duties. The fact that it's encased in a human body, however, must not be overlooked. A serious drawback, that. I sometimes think the ancients with their thinking machines had the right idea."

"They were toys compared to me," Piter snarled. "You yourself, Baron, could outperform those machines."

"Perhaps," the Baron said. "Ah, well . . ." He took a deep breath, belched. "Now, Piter, outline for my nephew the salient features of our campaign against the House of Atreides. Function as a Mentat for us, if you please."

"Baron, I've warned you not to trust one so young with this information. My observations of --"

"I'll be the judge of this," the Baron said. "I give you an order, Mentat. Perform one of your various functions."

"So be it," Piter said. He straightened, assuming an odd attitude of dignity -- as though it were another mask, but this time clothing his entire body. "In a few days Standard, the entire household of the Duke Leto will embark on a Spacing Guild liner for Arrakis. The Guild will deposit them at the city of Arrakeen rather than at our city of Carthag. The Duke's Mentat, Thufir Hawat, will have concluded rightly that Arrakeen is easier to defend."

"Listen carefully, Feyd," the Baron said. "Observe the plans within plans within plans."

Feyd-Rautha nodded, thinking: This is more like it. The old monster is letting me in on secret things at last. He must really mean for me to be his heir.

"There are several tangential possibilities," Piter said. "I indicate that House Atreides will go to Arrakis. We must not, however, ignore the possibility the Duke has contracted with the Guild to remove him to a place of safety outside the System. Others in like circumstances have become renegade Houses, taking family atomics and shields and fleeing beyond the Imperium."

"The Duke's too proud a man for that," the Baron said.

"It is a possibility," Piter said. "The ultimate effect for us would be the same, however."

"No, it would not!" the Baron growled. "I must have him dead and his line ended."

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"That's the high probability," Piter said. "There are certain preparations that indicate when a House is going renegade. The Duke appears to be doing none of these things."

"So," the Baron sighed. "Get on with it, Piter."

"At Arrakeen," Piter said, "the Duke and his family will occupy the Residency, lately the home of Count and Lady Fenring."

"The Ambassador to the Smugglers," the Baron chuckled.

"Ambassador to what?" Feyd-Rautha asked.

"Your uncle makes a joke," Piter said. "He calls Count Fenring Ambassador to the Smugglers, indicating the Emperor's interest in smuggling operations on Arrakis."

Feyd-Rautha turned a puzzled stare on his uncle. "Why?"

"Don't be dense, Feyd," the Baron snapped. "As long as the Guild remains effectively outside Imperial control, how could it be otherwise? How else could spies and assassins move about?"

Feyd-Rautha's mouth made a soundless "Oh-h-h-h."

"We've arranged diversions at the Residency," Piter said. "There'll be an attempt on the life of the Atreides heir -- an attempt which could succeed."

"Piter," the Baron rumbled, "you indicated --"

"I indicated accidents can happen," Piter said. "And the attempt must appear valid."

"Ah, but the lad has such a sweet young body," the Baron said. "Of course, he's potentially more dangerous than the father . . . with that witch mother training him. Accursed woman! Ah, well, please continue, Piter."

"Hawat will have divined that we have an agent planted on him," Piter said. "The obvious suspect is Dr. Yueh, who is indeed our agent. But Hawat has investigated and found that our doctor is a Suk School graduate with Imperial Conditioning -- supposedly safe enough to minister even to the Emperor. Great store is set on Imperial Conditioning. It's assumed that ultimate conditioning cannot be removed without killing the subject. However, as someone once observed, given the right lever you can move a planet. We found the lever that moved the doctor."

"How?" Feyd-Rautha asked. He found this a fascinating subject. Everyone knew you couldn't subvert Imperial Conditioning!

"Another time," the Baron said. "Continue, Piter."

"In place of Yueh," Piter said, "we'll drag a most interesting suspect across Hawat's path. The very audacity of this suspect will recommend her to Hawat's attention."

"Her?" Feyd-Rautha asked.

"The Lady Jessica herself," the Baron said.

"Is it not sublime?" Piter asked. "Hawat's mind will be so filled with this prospect it'll impair his function as a Mentat. He may even try to kill her." Piter frowned, then: "But I don't think he'll be able to carry it off."

"You don't want him to, eh?" the Baron asked.

"Don't distract me," Piter said. "While Hawat's occupied with the Lady Jessica, we'll divert him further with uprisings in a few garrison towns and the like. These will be put down. The Duke must believe he's gaining a measure of security. Then, when the moment is ripe, we'll signal Yueh and move in with our major force . . . ah . . ."

"Go ahead, tell him all of it," the Baron said.

"We'll move in strengthened by two legions of Sardaukar disguised in Harkonnen livery."

"Sardaukar!" Feyd-Rautha breathed. His mind focused on the dread Imperial troops, the killers without mercy, the soldier fanatics of the Padishah Emperor.

"You see how I trust you, Feyd," the Baron said. "No hint of this must ever reach another Great House, else the Landsraad might unite against the Imperial House and there'd be chaos."

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"The main point," Piter said, "is this: since House Harkonnen is being used to do the Imperial dirty work, we've gained a true advantage. It's a dangerous advantage, to be sure, but if used cautiously, will bring House Harkonnen greater wealth than that of any other House in the Imperium."

"You have no idea how much wealth is involved, Feyd," the Baron said. "Not in your wildest imaginings. To begin, we'll have an irrevocable directorship in the CHOAM Company."

Feyd-Rautha nodded. Wealth was the thing. CHOAM was the key to wealth, each noble House dipping from the company's coffers whatever it could under the power of the directorships. Those CHOAM directorships -- they were the real evidence of political power in the Imperium, passing with the shifts of voting strength within the Landsraad as it balanced itself against the Emperor and his supporters.

"The Duke Leto," Piter said, "may attempt to flee to the new Fremmen scum along the desert's edge. Or he may try to send his family into that imagined security. But that path is blocked by one of His Majesty's agents -- the planetary ecologist. You may remember him -- Kynes."

"Feyd remembers him," the Baron said. "Get on with it."

"You do not drool very prettily, Baron," Piter said.

"Get on with it, I command you!" the Baron roared.

Piter shrugged. "If matters go as planned," he said, "House Harkonnen will have a subfief on Arrakis within a Standard year. Your uncle will have dispensation of that fief. His own personal agent will rule on Arrakis."

"More profits," Feyd-Rautha said.

"Indeed," the Baron said. And he thought: It's only just. We're the ones who tamed Arrakis . . . except for the few mongrel Fremmen hiding in the skirts of the desert . . . and some tame smugglers bound to the planet almost as tightly as the native labor pool.

"And the Great Houses will know that the Baron has destroyed the Atreides," Piter said. "They will know."

"They will know," the Baron breathed.

"Loveliest of all," Piter said, "is that the Duke will know, too. He knows now. He can already feel the trap."

"It's true the Duke knows," the Baron said, and his voice held a note of sadness. "He could not help but know . . . more's the pity."

The Baron moved out and away from the globe of Arrakis. As he emerged from the shadows, his figure took on dimension -- grossly and immensely fat. And with subtle bulges beneath folds of his dark robes to reveal that all this fat was sustained partly by portable suspensors harnessed to his flesh. He might weigh two hundred Standard kilos in actuality, but his feet would carry no more than fifty of them.

"I am hungry," the Baron rumbled, and he rubbed his protruding lips with a beringed hand, stared down at Feyd-Rautha through fat-enfolded eyes. "Send for food, my darling. We will eat before we retire."

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Thus spoke St. Alia-of-the-Knife: "The Reverend Mother must combine the seductive wiles of a courtesan with the untouchable majesty of a virgin goddess, holding these attributes in tension so long as the powers of her youth endure. For when youth and beauty have gone, she will find that the place-between, once occupied by tension, has become a wellspring of cunning and resourcefulness." -from "Muad'Dib, Family Commentaries" by the Princess Irulan

"Well, Jessica, what have you to say for yourself?" asked the Reverend Mother.

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It was near sunset at Castle Caladan on the day of Paul's ordeal. The two women were alone in Jessica's morning room while Paul waited in the adjoining soundproofed Meditation Chamber.

Jessica stood facing the south windows. She saw and yet did not see the evening's banked colors across meadow and river. She heard and yet did not hear the Reverend Mother's question.

There had been another ordeal once -- so many years ago. A skinny girl with hair the color of bronze, her body tortured by the winds of puberty, had entered the study of the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam, Proctor Superior of the Bene Gesserit school on Wallach IX. Jessica looked down at her right hand, flexed the fingers, remembering the pain, the terror, the anger.

"Poor Paul," she whispered.

"I asked you a question, Jessica!" The old woman's voice was snappish, demanding.

"What? Oh . . ." Jessica tore her attention away from the past, faced the Reverend Mother, who sat with back to the stone wall between the two west windows. "What do you want me to say?"

"What do I want you to say? What do I want you to say?" The old voice carried a tone of cruel mimicry.

"So I had a son!" Jessica flared. And she knew she was being goaded into this anger deliberately.

"You were told to bear only daughters to the Atreides."

"It meant so much to him," Jessica pleaded.

"And you in your pride thought you could produce the Kwisatz Haderach!"

Jessica lifted her chin. "I sensed the possibility."

"You thought only of your Duke's desire for a son," the old woman snapped.

"And his desires don't figure in this. An Atreides daughter could've been wed to a Harkonnen heir and sealed the breach. You've hopelessly complicated matters. We may lose both bloodlines now."

"You're not infallible," Jessica said. She braved the steady stare from the old eyes.

Presently, the old woman muttered: "What's done is done."

"I vowed never to regret my decision," Jessica said.

"How noble," the Reverend Mother sneered. "No regrets. We shall see when you're a fugitive with a price on your head and every man's hand turned against you to seek your life and the life of your son."

Jessica paled. "Is there no alternative?"

"Alternative? A Bene Gesserit should ask that?"

"I ask only what you see in the future with your superior abilities."

"I see in the future what I've seen in the past. You well know the pattern of our affairs, Jessica. The race knows its own mortality and fears stagnation of its heredity. It's in the bloodstream -- the urge to mingle genetic strains without plan. The Imperium, the CHOAM Company, all the Great Houses, they are but bits of flotsam in the path of the flood."

"CHOAM," Jessica muttered. "I suppose it's already decided how they'll redivide the spoils of Arrakis."

"What is CHOAM but the weather vane of our times," the old woman said. "The Emperor and his friends now command fifty-nine point six-five per cent of the CHOAM directorship's votes. Certainly they smell profits, and likely as others smell those same profits his voting strength will increase. This is the pattern of history, girl."

"That's certainly what I need right now," Jessica said. "A review of history."

"Don't be facetious, girl! You know as well as I do what forces surround us. We've a three-point civilization: the Imperial Household balanced against the Federated Great Houses of the Landsraad, and between them, the Guild with its damnable monopoly on interstellar transport. In politics, the tripod is the most

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unstable of all structures. It'd be bad enough without the complication of a feudal trade culture which turns its back on most science."

Jessica spoke bitterly: "Chips in the path of the flood -- and this chip here, this is the Duke Leto, and this one's his son, and this one's --"

"Oh, shut up, girl. You entered this with full knowledge of the delicate edge you walked."

" 'I am Bene Gesserit: I exist only to serve,' " Jessica quoted.

"Truth." the old woman said. "And all we can hope for now is to prevent this from erupting into general conflagration, to salvage what we can of the key bloodlines."

Jessica closed her eyes, feeling tears press out beneath the lids. She fought down the inner trembling, the outer trembling, the uneven breathing, the ragged pulse, the sweating of the palms. Presently, she said, "I'll pay for my own mistake."

"And your son will pay with you."

"I'll shield him as well as I'm able."

"Shield!" the old woman snapped. "You well know the weakness there! Shield your son too much, Jessica, and he'll not grow strong enough to fulfill any destiny."

Jessica turned away, looked out the window at the gathering darkness. "Is it really that terrible, this planet of Arrakis?"

"Bad enough, but not all bad. The Missionaria Protectiva has been in there and softened it up somewhat." The Reverend Mother heaved herself to her feet, straightened a fold in her gown. "Call the boy in here. I must be leaving soon."

"Must you?"

The old woman's voice softened. "Jessica, girl, I wish I could stand in your place and take your sufferings. But each of us must make her own path."

"I know."

"You're as dear to me as any of my own daughters, but I cannot let that interfere with duty."

"I understand . . . the necessity."

"What you did, Jessica, and why you did it -- we both know. But kindness forces me to tell you there's little chance your lad will be the Bene Gesserit Totality. You mustn't let yourself hope too much."

Jessica shook tears from the corners of her eyes. It was an angry gesture. "You make me feel like a little girl again -- reciting my first lesson." She forced the words out: " 'Humans must never submit to animals.' " A dry sob shook her. In a low voice, she said: "I've been so lonely."

"It should be one of the tests," the old woman said. "Humans are almost always lonely. Now summon the boy. He's had a long, frightening day. But he's had time to think and remember, and I must ask the other questions about these dreams of his."

Jessica nodded, went to the door of the Meditation Chamber, opened it. "Paul, come in now, please."

Paul emerged with a stubborn slowness. He stared at his mother as though she were a stranger. Wariness veiled his eyes when he glanced at the Reverend Mother, but this time he nodded to her, the nod one gives an equal. He heard his mother close the door behind him.

"Young man," the old woman said, "let's return to this dream business."

"What do you want?"

"Do you dream every night?"

"Not dreams worth remembering. I can remember every dream, but some are worth remembering and some aren't."

"How do you know the difference?"

"I just know it."

The old woman glanced at Jessica, back to Paul. "What did you dream last night? Was it worth remembering?"



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"Yes." Paul closed his eyes. "I dreamed a cavern . . . and water . . . and a girl there -- very skinny with big eyes. Her eyes are all blue, no whites in them. I talk to her and tell her about you, about seeing the Reverend Mother on Caladan." Paul opened his eyes.

"And the thing you tell this strange girl about seeing me, did it happen today?"

Paul thought about this, then: "Yes. I tell the girl you came and put a stamp of strangeness on me."

"Stamp of strangeness," the old woman breathed, and again she shot a glance at Jessica, returned her attention to Paul. "Tell me truly now, Paul, do you often have dreams of things that happen afterward exactly as you dreamed them?"

"Yes. And I've dreamed about that girl before."

"Oh? You know her?"

"I will know her."

"Tell me about her."

Again, Paul closed his eyes. "We're in a little place in some rocks where it's sheltered. It's almost night, but it's hot and I can see patches of sand out of an opening in the rocks. We're . . . waiting for something . . . for me to go meet some people. And she's frightened but trying to hide it from me, and I'm excited. And she says: 'Tell me about the waters of your homeworld, Usul.' " Paul opened his eyes. "Isn't that strange? My homeworld's Caladan. I've never even heard of a planet called Usul."

"Is there more to this dream?" Jessica prompted.

"Yes. But maybe she was calling me Usul," Paul said. "I just thought of that." Again, he closed his eyes. "She asks me to tell her about the waters. And I take her hand. And I say I'll tell her a poem. And I tell her the poem, but I have to explain some of the words -- like beach and surf and seaweed and seagulls."

"What poem?" the Reverend Mother asked.

Paul opened his eyes. "It's just one of Gurney Halleck's tone poems for sad times."

Behind Paul Jessica began to recite:

"I remember salt smoke from a beach fire  
And shadows under the pines --  
Solid, clean . . . fixed --  
Seagulls perched at the tip of land,  
White upon green . . .  
And a wind comes through the pines  
To sway the shadows;  
The seagulls spread their wings,  
Lift  
And fill the sky with screeches.  
And I hear the wind  
Blowing across our beach,  
And the surf,  
And I see that our fire  
Has scorched the seaweed."

"That's the one," Paul said.

The old woman stared at Paul, then: "Young man, as a Proctor of the Bene Gesserit, I seek the Kwisatz Haderach, the male who truly can become one of us. Your mother sees this possibility in you, but she sees with the eyes of a mother. Possibility I see, too, but no more."

She fell silent and Paul saw that she wanted him to speak. He waited her out.

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Presently, she said: "As you will, then. You've depths in you; that I'll grant."

"May I go now?" he asked.

"Don't you want to hear what the Reverend Mother can tell you about the Kwisatz Haderach?" Jessica asked.

"She said those who tried for it died."

"But I can help you with a few hints at why they failed," the Reverend Mother said.

She talks of hints, Paul thought. She doesn't really know anything. And he said: "Hint then."

"And be damned to me?" She smiled wryly, a crisscross of wrinkles in the old face. "Very well: 'That which submits rules.' "

He felt astonishment: she was talking about such elementary things as tension within meaning. Did she think his mother had taught him nothing at all?

"That's a hint?" he asked.

"We're not here to bandy words or quibble over their meaning," the old woman said. "The willow submits to the wind and prospers until one day it is many willows -- a wall against the wind. This is the willow's purpose."

Paul stared at her. She said purpose and he felt the word buffet him, reinflecting him with terrible purpose. He experienced a sudden anger at her: fatuous old witch with her mouth full of platitudes.

"You think I could be this Kwisatz Haderach," he said. "You talk about me, but you haven't said one thing about what we can do to help my father. I've heard you talking to my mother. You talk as though my father were dead. Well, he isn't!"

"If there were a thing to be done for him, we'd have done it," the old woman growled. "We may be able to salvage you. Doubtful, but possible. But for your father, nothing. When you've learned to accept that as a fact, you've learned a real Bene Gesserit lesson."

Paul saw how the words shook his mother. He glared at the old woman. How could she say such a thing about his father? What made her so sure? His mind seethed with resentment.

The Reverend Mother looked at Jessica. "You've been training him in the Way -- I've seen the signs of it. I'd have done the same in your shoes and devil take the Rules."

Jessica nodded.

"Now, I caution you," said the old woman, "to ignore the regular order of training. His own safety requires the Voice. He already has a good start in it, but we both know how much more he needs . . . and that desperately." She stepped close to Paul, stared down at him. "Goodbye, young human. I hope you make it. But if you don't -- well, we shall yet succeed."

Once more she looked at Jessica. A flicker sign of understanding passed between them. Then the old woman swept from the room, her robes hissing, with not another backward glance. The room and its occupants already were shut from her thoughts.

But Jessica had caught one glimpse of the Reverend Mother's face as she turned away. There had been tears on the seamed cheeks. The tears were more unnerving than any other word or sign that had passed between them this day.

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You have read that Muad'Dib had no playmates his own age on Caladan. The dangers were too great. But Muad'Dib did have wonderful companion-teachers. There was Gurney Halleck, the troubadour-warrior. You will sing some of Gurney's songs, as you read along in this book. There was Thufir Hawat, the old Mentat Master of Assassins, who struck fear even into the heart of the Padishah Emperor. There were Duncan Idaho, the Swordmaster of the Ginaz; Dr. Wellington Yueh, a name

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black in treachery but bright in knowledge; the Lady Jessica, who guided her son in the Bene Gesserit Way, and -- of course -- the Duke Leto, whose qualities as a father have long been overlooked.

-from "A Child's History of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan

Thufir Hawat slipped into the training room of Castle Caladan, closed the door softly. He stood there a moment, feeling old and tired and storm-leathered. His left leg ached where it had been slashed once in the service of the Old Duke.

Three generations of them now, he thought.

He stared across the big room bright with the light of noon pouring through the skylights, saw the boy seated with back to the door, intent on papers and charts spread across an ell table.

How many times must I tell that lad never to settle himself with his back to a door? Hawat cleared his throat.

Paul remained bent over his studies.

A cloud shadow passed over the skylights. Again, Hawat cleared his throat.

Paul straightened, spoke without turning: "I know. I'm sitting with my back to a door."

Hawat suppressed a smile, strode across the room.

Paul looked up at the grizzled old man who stopped at a corner of the table. Hawat's eyes were two pools of alertness in a dark and deeply seamed face.

"I heard you coming down the hall," Paul said. "And I heard you open the door."

"The sounds I make could be imitated."

"I'd know the difference."

He might at that, Hawat thought. That witch-mother of his is giving him the deep training, certainly. I wonder what her precious school thinks of that? Maybe that's why they sent the old Proctor here -- to whip our dear Lady Jessica into line.

Hawat pulled up a chair across from Paul, sat down facing the door. He did it pointedly, leaned back and studied the room. It struck him as an odd place suddenly, a stranger-place with most of its hardware already gone off to Arrakis. A training table remained, and a fencing mirror with its crystal prisms quiescent, the target dummy beside it patched and padded, looking like an ancient foot soldier maimed and battered in the wars.

There stand I, Hawat thought.

"Thufir, what're you thinking?" Paul asked.

Hawat looked at the boy. "I was thinking we'll all be out of here soon and likely never see the place again."

"Does that make you sad?"

"Sad? Nonsense! Parting with friends is a sadness. A place is only a place." He glanced at the charts on the table. "And Arrakis is just another place."

"Did my father send you up to test me?"

Hawat scowled -- the boy had such observing ways about him. He nodded.

"You're thinking it'd have been nicer if he'd come up himself, but you must know how busy he is. He'll be along later."

"I've been studying about the storms on Arrakis."

"The storms. I see."

"They sound pretty bad."

"That's too cautious a word: bad. Those storms build up across six or seven thousand kilometers of flatlands, feed on anything that can give them a push -- coriolis force, other storms, anything that has an ounce of energy in it. They can blow up to seven hundred kilometers an hour, loaded with everything loose that's in their way -- sand, dust, everything. They can eat flesh off bones and etch the bones to slivers."

"Why don't they have weather control?"

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"Arrakis has special problems, costs are higher, and there'd be maintenance and the like. The Guild wants a dreadful high price for satellite control and your father's House isn't one of the big rich ones, lad. You know that."

"Have you ever seen the Fremens?"

The lad's mind is darting all over today, Hawat thought.

"Like as not I have seen them," he said. "There's little to tell them from the folk of the graben and sink. They all wear those great flowing robes. And they stink to heaven in any closed space. It's from those suits they wear -- call them 'stillsuits' -- that reclaim the body's own water."

Paul swallowed, suddenly aware of the moisture in his mouth, remembering a dream of thirst. That people could want so for water they had to recycle their body moisture struck him with a feeling of desolation. "Water's precious there," he said.

Hawat nodded, thinking: Perhaps I'm doing it, getting across to him the importance of this planet as an enemy. It's madness to go in there without that caution in our minds.

Paul looked up at the skylight, aware that it had begun to rain. He saw the spreading wetness on the gray meta-glass. "Water," he said.

"You'll learn a great concern for water," Hawat said. "As the Duke's son you'll never want for it, but you'll see the pressures of thirst all around you."

Paul wet his lips with his tongue, thinking back to the day a week ago and the ordeal with the Reverend Mother. She, too, had said something about water starvation.

"You'll learn about the funeral plains," she'd said, "about the wilderness that is empty, the wasteland where nothing lives except the spice and the sandworms. You'll stain your eyepits to reduce the sun glare. Shelter will mean a hollow out of the wind and hidden from view. You'll ride upon your own two feet without 'thopter or groundcar or mount."

And Paul had been caught more by her tone -- singsong and wavering -- than by her words.

"When you live upon Arrakis," she had said, "khala, the land is empty. The moons will be your friends, the sun your enemy."

Paul had sensed his mother come up beside him away from her post guarding the door. She had looked at the Reverend Mother and asked: "Do you see no hope. Your Reverence?"

"Not for the father." And the old woman had waved Jessica to silence, looked down at Paul. "Grave this on your memory, lad: A world is supported by four things . . ." She held up four big-knuckled fingers. ". . . the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the righteous and the valor of the brave. But all of these are as nothing . . ." She closed her fingers into a fist. ". . . without a ruler who knows the art of ruling. Make that the science of your tradition!"

A week had passed since that day with the Reverend Mother. Her words were only now beginning to come into full register. Now, sitting in the training room with Thufir Hawat, Paul felt a sharp pang of fear. He looked across at the Mentat's puzzled frown.

"Where were you woolgathering that time?" Hawat asked.

"Did you meet the Reverend Mother?"

"That Truthsayer witch from the Imperium?" Hawat's eyes quickened with interest. "I met her."

"She . . ." Paul hesitated, found that he couldn't tell Hawat about the ordeal. The inhibitions went deep.

"Yes? What did she?"

Paul took two deep breaths. "She said a thing." He closed his eyes, calling up the words, and when he spoke his voice unconsciously took on some of the old woman's tone: " 'You, Paul Atreides, descendant of kings, son of a Duke, you

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must learn to rule. It's something none of your ancestors learned.' " Paul opened his eyes, said: "That made me angry and I said my father rules an entire planet. And she said, 'He's losing it.' And I said my father was getting a richer planet. And she said, 'He'll lose that one, too.' And I wanted to run and warn my father, but she said he'd already been warned -- by you, by Mother, by many people."

"True enough," Hawat muttered.

"Then why're we going?" Paul demanded.

"Because the Emperor ordered it. And because there's hope in spite of what that witch-spy said. What else spouted from this ancient fountain of wisdom?"

Paul looked down at his right hand clenched into a fist beneath the table. Slowly, he willed the muscles to relax. She put some kind of hold on me, he thought. How?

"She asked me to tell her what it is to rule," Paul said. "And I said that one commands. And she said I had some unlearning to do."

She hit a mark there right enough, Hawat thought. He nodded for Paul to continue.

"She said a ruler must learn to persuade and not to compel. She said he must lay the best coffee hearth to attract the finest men."

"How'd she figure your father attracted men like Duncan and Gurney?" Hawat asked.

Paul shrugged. "Then she said a good ruler has to learn his world's language, that it's different for every world. And I thought she meant they didn't speak Galach on Arrakis, but she said that wasn't it at all. She said she meant the language of the rocks and growing things, the language you don't hear just with your ears. And I said that's what Dr. Yueh calls the Mystery of Life."

Hawat chuckled. "How'd that sit with her?"

"I think she got mad. She said the mystery of life isn't a problem to solve, but a reality to experience. So I quoted the First Law of Mentat at her: 'A process cannot be understood by stopping it. Understanding must move with the flow of the process, must join it and flow with it.' That seemed to satisfy her."

He seems to be getting over it, Hawat thought, but that old witch frightened him. Why did she do it?

"Thufir," Paul said, "will Arrakis be as bad as she said?"

"Nothing could be that bad," Hawat said and forced a smile. "Take those Fremens, for example, the renegade people of the desert. By first-approximation analysis, I can tell you there're many, many more of them than the Imperium suspects. People live there, lad: a great many people, and . . ." Hawat put a sinewy finger beside his eye. ". . . they hate Harkonnens with a bloody passion. You must not breathe a word of this, lad. I tell you only as your father's helper."

"My father has told me of Salusa Secundus," Paul said. "Do you know, Thufir, it sounds much like Arrakis . . . perhaps not quite as bad, but much like it."

"We do not really know of Salusa Secundus today," Hawat said. "Only what it was like long ago . . . mostly. But what is known -- you're right on that score."

"Will the Fremens help us?"

"It's a possibility." Hawat stood up. "I leave today for Arrakis. Meanwhile, you take care of yourself for an old man who's fond of you, heh? Come around here like the good lad and sit facing the door. It's not that I think there's any danger in the castle; it's just a habit I want you to form."

Paul got to his feet, moved around the table. "You're going today?"

"Today it is, and you'll be following tomorrow. Next time we meet it'll be on the soil of your new world." He gripped Paul's right arm at the bicep. "Keep your knife arm free, heh? And your shield at full charge." He released the arm, patted Paul's shoulder, whirled and strode quickly to the door.

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"Thufir!" Paul called.

Hawat turned, standing in the open doorway.

"Don't sit with your back to any doors," Paul said.

A grin spread across the seamed old face. "That I won't, lad. Depend on it." And he was gone, shutting the door softly behind.

Paul sat down where Hawat had been, straightened the papers. One more day here, he thought. He looked around the room. We're leaving. The idea of departure was suddenly more real to him than it had ever been before. He recalled another thing the old woman had said about a world being the sum of many things -- the people, the dirt, the growing things, the moons, the tides, the suns -- the unknown sum called nature, a vague summation without any sense of the now. And he wondered: What is the now?

The door across from Paul banged open and an ugly lump of a man lurched through it preceded by a handful of weapons.

"Well, Gurney Halleck," Paul called, "are you the new weapons master?"

Halleck kicked the door shut with one heel. "You'd rather I came to play games, I know," he said. He glanced about the room, noting that Hawat's men already had been over it, checking, making it safe for a duke's heir. The subtle code signs were all around.

Paul watched the rolling, ugly man set himself back in motion, veer toward the training table with the load of weapons, saw the nine-string baliset slung over Gurney's shoulder with the multipick woven through the strings near the head of the fingerboard.

Halleck dropped the weapons on the exercise table, lined them up -- the rapiers, the bodkins, the kindjals, the slow-pellet stunners, the shield belts. The inkvine scar along his jawline writhed as he turned, casting a smile across the room.

"So you don't even have a good morning for me, you young imp," Halleck said. "And what barb did you sink in old Hawat? He passed me in the hall like a man running to his enemy's funeral."

Paul grinned. Of all his father's men, he liked Gurney Halleck best, knew the man's moods and deviltry, his humors, and thought of him more as a friend than as a hired sword.

Halleck swung the baliset off his shoulder, began tuning it. "If y' won't talk, y' won't," he said.

Paul stood, advanced across the room, calling out: "Well, Gurney, do we come prepared for music when it's fighting time?"

"So it's sass for our elders today," Halleck said. He tried a chord on the instrument, nodded.

"Where's Duncan Idaho?" Paul asked. "Isn't he supposed to be teaching me weaponry?"

"Duncan's gone to lead the second wave onto Arrakis," Halleck said. "All you have left is poor Gurney who's fresh out of fight and spoiling for music." He struck another chord, listened to it, smiled. "And it was decided in council that you being such a poor fighter we'd best teach you the music trade so's you won't waste your life entire."

"Maybe you'd better sing me a lay then," Paul said. "I want to be sure how not to do it."

"Ah-h-h, hah!" Gurney laughed, and he swung into "Galacian Girls." his multipick a blur over the strings as he sang:

"Oh-h-h, the Galacian girls  
Will do it for pearls,  
And the Arrakeen for water!  
But if you desire dames  
Like consuming flames,  
Try a Caladanin daughter!"

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"Not bad for such a poor hand with the pick," Paul said, "but if my mother heard you singing a bawdy like that in the castle, she'd have your ears on the outer wall for decoration."

Gurney pulled at his left ear. "Poor decoration, too, they having been bruised so much listening at keyholes while a young lad I know practiced some strange ditties on his baliset."

"So you've forgotten what it's like to find sand in your bed," Paul said. He pulled a shield belt from the table, buckled it fast around his waist. "Then, let's fight!"

Halleck's eyes went wide in mock surprise. "So! It was your wicked hand did that deed! Guard yourself today, young master -- guard yourself." He grabbed up a rapier, laced the air with it. "I'm a hellfiend out for revenge!"

Paul lifted the companion rapier, bent it in his hands, stood in the aguile, one foot forward. He let his manner go solemn in a comic imitation of Dr. Yueh.

"What a dolt my father sends me for weaponry," Paul intoned. "This doltish Gurney Halleck has forgotten the first lesson for a fighting man armed and shielded." Paul snapped the force button at his waist, felt the crinkled-skin tingling of the defensive field at his forehead and down his back, heard external sounds take on characteristic shield-filtered flatness. "In shield fighting, one moves fast on defense, slow on attack," Paul said. "Attack has the sole purpose of tricking the opponent into a misstep, setting him up for the attack sinister. The shield turns the fast blow, admits the slow kindjal!" Paul snapped up the rapier, feinted fast and whipped it back for a slow thrust timed to enter a shield's mindless defenses.

Halleck watched the action, turned at the last minute to let the blunted blade pass his chest. "Speed, excellent," he said. "But you were wide open for an underhanded counter with a slip-tip."

Paul stepped back, chagrined.

"I should whap your backside for such carelessness," Halleck said. He lifted a naked kindjal from the table and held it up. "This in the hand of an enemy can let out your life's blood! You're an apt pupil, none better, but I've warned you that not even in play do you let a man inside your guard with death in his hand."

"I guess I'm not in the mood for it today," Paul said.

"Mood?" Halleck's voice betrayed his outrage even through the shield's filtering. "What has mood to do with it? You fight when the necessity arises -- no matter the mood! Mood's a thing for cattle or making love or playing the baliset. It's not for fighting."

"I'm sorry, Gurney."

"You're not sorry enough!"

Halleck activated his own shield, crouched with kindjal outthrust in left hand, the rapier poised high in his right. "Now I say guard yourself for true!" He leaped high to one side, then forward, pressing a furious attack.

Paul fell back, parrying. He felt the field crackling as shield edges touched and repelled each other, sensed the electric tingling of the contact along his skin. What's gotten into Gurney? he asked himself. He's not faking this! Paul moved his left hand, dropped his bodkin into his palm from its wrist sheath.

"You see a need for an extra blade, eh?" Halleck grunted.

Is this betrayal? Paul wondered. Surely not Gurney!

Around the room they fought -- thrust and parry, feint and counterfeint. The air within their shield bubbles grew stale from the demands on it that the slow interchange along barrier edges could not replenish. With each new shield contact, the smell of ozone grew stronger.

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Paul continued to back, but now he directed his retreat toward the exercise table. If I can turn him beside the table, I'll show him a trick, Paul thought. One more step, Gurney.

Halleck took the step.

Paul directed a parry downward, turned, saw Halleck's rapier catch against the table's edge. Paul flung himself aside, thrust high with rapier and came in across Halleck's neckline with the bodkin. He stopped the blade an inch from the jugular.

"Is this what you seek?" Paul whispered.

"Look down, lad," Gurney panted.

Paul obeyed, saw Halleck's kindjal thrust under the table's edge, the tip almost touching Paul's groin.

"We'd have joined each other in death," Halleck said. "But I'll admit you fought some better when pressed to it. You seemed to get the mood." And he grinned wolfishly, the inkvine scar rippling along his jaw.

"The way you came at me," Paul said. "Would you really have drawn my blood?"

Halleck withdrew the kindjal, straightened. "If you'd fought one whit beneath your abilities. I'd have scratched you a good one, a scar you'd remember. I'll not have my favorite pupil fall to the first Harkonnen tramp who happens along."

Paul deactivated his shield, leaned on the table to catch his breath. "I deserved that, Gurney. But it would've angered my father if you'd hurt me. I'll not have you punished for my failing."

"As to that," Halleck said, "it was my failing, too. And you needn't worry about a training scar or two. You're lucky you have so few. As to your father -- the Duke'd punish me only if I failed to make a first-class fighting man out of you. And I'd have been failing there if I hadn't explained the fallacy in this mood thing you've suddenly developed."

Paul straightened, slipped his bodkin back into its wrist sheath.

"It's not exactly play we do here," Halleck said.

Paul nodded. He felt a sense of wonder at the uncharacteristic seriousness in Halleck's manner, the sobering intensity. He looked at the beet-colored inkvine scar on the man's jaw, remembering the story of how it had been put there by Beast Rabban in a Harkonnen slave pit on Giedi Prime. And Paul felt a sudden shame that he had doubted Halleck even for an instant. It occurred to Paul, then, that the making of Halleck's scar had been accompanied by pain -- a pain as intense, perhaps, as that inflicted by a Reverend Mother. He thrust this thought aside; it chilled their world.

"I guess I did hope for some play today," Paul said. "Things are so serious around here lately."

Halleck turned away to hide his emotions. Something burned in his eyes. There was pain in him -- like a blister, all that was left of some lost yesterday that Time had pruned off him.

How soon this child must assume his manhood, Halleck thought. How soon he must read that form within his mind, that contract of brutal caution, to enter the necessary fact on the necessary line: "Please list your next of kin."

Halleck spoke without turning: "I sensed the play in you, lad, and I'd like nothing better than to join in it. But this no longer can be play. Tomorrow we go to Arrakis. Arrakis is real. The Harkonnens are real."

Paul touched his forehead with his rapier blade held vertical.

Halleck turned, saw the salute and acknowledged it with a nod. He gestured to the practice dummy. "Now, we'll work on your timing. Let me see you catch that thing sinister. I'll control it from over here where I can have a full view of the action. And I warn you I'll be trying new counters today. There's a warning you'd not get from a real enemy."

Paul stretched up on his toes to relieve his muscles. He felt solemn with the sudden realization that his life had become filled with swift changes. He



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