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DUNE

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Foreword by Hari Kunzru



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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.'

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'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.

'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

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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 half 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 Fremen, 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.

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

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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

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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.

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.

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'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 one 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 it.

'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

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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.'

'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

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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 throbbed up his arm. Sweat stood out on his forehead. Every fiber cried out to withdraw the hand from the 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 penny 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!'