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Before *The Matrix*, before *Star Wars*, before *Ender's Game* and *Neuromancer* there was *Dune*: winner of the prestigious Hugo and Nebula awards, and widely considered one of the greatest science fiction novels ever written.

Frank Herbert (1920-1986) spent his early life in the Pacific Northwest of America. He was a journalist, photographer, political speech-writer and radio news commentator.

FRANK HERBERT

Dune Messiah



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Prologue

The Weird of Dune

Dune is the planet Arrakis, an arid world of great deserts where life survives against terrifying odds. The semi-nomadic Fremen of Dune base all their customs on water scarcity and face the deserts in stillsuits which recover all moisture. Gigantic sand worms and savage storms are a constant menace to them. Dune's only resource is the melange, an addictive drug produced by the worms. This 'spice' aids longevity and gives an adept some ability to foresee the future.

PAUL ATREIDES was the son of Dune's ruler. When his father was killed in a war with the rival Harkonnen nobility, Paul fled into the desert with his pregnant mother, the LADY JESSICA. She was an adept, trained by the Bene Gesserit – a female order devoted to the mental arts and the control of genetic lines. According to them, Paul was of a line that was to produce a kwisatz haderach, the messiah of the future.

DUNCAN IDAHO was killed in saving them. Paul fought his way to acceptance by the Fremen, and even learned to control and ride the sand worms. In one of their rituals, he took a massive dose of drugs which produced a permanent change in him, giving him full vision of the future – or futures. His mother also took the drug, trying to control it by Bene Gesserit methods. As a result, Paul's sister ALIA was made aware of all

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her mother's knowledge while still in the womb, and was fully cognitive at birth.

In time, Paul became the accepted leader of the Fremen. He mated with a Fremen girl, CHANI, and adopted most of their customs. But his Atreides mind had been trained to disciplines unknown to Fremen, and he gave them an organisation and mission they had not known before. He also planned to change the climate of Dune to bring water to the planet.

Before his plans were fully developed, the Harkonnens again struck at Dune and its capital, Arrakeen. In spite of the supposedly invincible Sardaukar soldiers, Paul's Fremen forces overcame the enemy in a great battle.

In the treaty Paul imposed, he gained a power base that would enable him to begin carving out a star empire. He also took the Imperial heir, PRINCESS IRULAN, as his consort, though he refused to consummate the marriage, remaining true to Chani.

In the ensuing twelve years, he created his empire. But now all the ancient power groups are beginning to unite and conspire against him and against the legend of Muad'dib, as he is called.

Such a rich store of myths enfolds Paul Muad'dib, the Mentat Emperor, and his sister, Alia, it is difficult to see the real persons behind these veils. But there were, after all, a man born Paul Atreides and a woman born Alia. Their flesh was subject to space and time. And even though their oracular powers placed them beyond the usual limits of time and space, they came from human stock. They experienced real events which left real traces upon a real universe. To understand them, it must be seen that their catastrophe was the catastrophe of all mankind. This work is dedicated, then, not to Muad'dib or his sister, but to their heirs – to all of us.

– Dedication in the Muad'dib Concordance as copied from The Tabla Memorium of the Mahdi Spirit Cult

Muad'dib's Imperial reign generated more historians than any other era in human history. Most of them argued a particular viewpoint, jealous and sectarian, but it says something about the peculiar impact of this man that he aroused such passions on so many diverse worlds.

Of course, he contained the ingredients of history, ideal and idealised. This man, born Paul Atreides in an

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ancient Great Family, received the deep *prana-bindu* training from the Lady Jessica, his Bene Gesserit mother, and had through this a superb control over muscles and nerves. But more than that, he was a *mentat*, an intellect whose capacities surpassed those of the religiously proscribed mechanical computers used by the ancients.

Above all else, Muad'dib was the *kwisatz haderach* which the Sisterhood's breeding program had sought across thousands of generations.

The kwisatz haderach, then, the one who could be 'many places at once,' this prophet, this man through whom the Bene Gesserit hoped to control human destiny – this man became Emperor Muad'dib and executed a marriage of convenience with a daughter of the Padishah Emperor he had defeated.

Think on the paradox, the failure implicit in this moment, for you surely have read other histories and know the surface facts. Muad'dib's wild Fremen did, indeed, overwhelm the Padishah Shaddam IV. They toppled the Sardaukar legions, the allied forces of the Great Houses, the Harkonnen armies and the mercenaries bought with money voted in the Landsraad. He brought the Spacing Guild to its knees and placed his own sister, Alia, on the religious throne the Bene Gesserit had thought their own.

He did all these things and more.

Muad'dib's Qizarate missionaries carried their religious war across space in a Jihad whose major impetus endured only twelve standard years, but in that time, religious colonialism brought all but a fraction of the human universe under one rule.

He did this because capture of Arrakis, that planet

known more often as Dune, gave him a monopoly over the ultimate coin of the realm – the geriatric spice, melange, the poison that gave life.

Here was another ingredient of ideal history: a material whose psychic chemistry unraveled Time. Without melange, the Sisterhood's Reverend Mothers could not perform their feats of observation and human control. Without melange, the Guild's Steersmen could not navigate across space. Without melange, billions upon billions of Imperial citizens would die of addictive withdrawal.

Without melange, Paul-Muad'dib could not prophesy.

We know this moment of supreme power contained failure. There can be only one answer, that completely accurate and total prediction is lethal.

Other histories say Muad'dib was defeated by obvious plotters – the Guild, the Sisterhood and the scientific amoralists of the Bene Tleilax with their Face-Dancer disguises. Other histories point out the spies in Muad'dib's household. They make much of the Dune Tarot which clouded Muad'dib's powers of prophecy. Some show how Muad'dib was made to accept the services of a *ghola*, the flesh brought back from the dead and trained to destroy him. But certainly they must know this ghola was Duncan Idaho, the Atreides lieutenant who perished saving the life of the young Paul.

Yet, they delineate the Qizarate cabal guided by Korba the Panegyrist. They take us step by step through Korba's plan to make a martyr of Muad'dib and place the blame on Chani, the Fremen concubine.

How can any of this explain the facts as history has revealed them? They cannot. Only through the lethal

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nature of prophecy can we understand the failure of such enormous and far-seeing power.

Hopefully, other historians will learn something from this revelation.

– Analysis of History: Muad'dib
by Bronso of Ix

There exists no separation between gods and men; one blends softly casual into the other.

– Proverbs of Muad'dib

Despite the murderous nature of the plot he hoped to devise, the thoughts of Scytale, the Tleilaxu Face Dancer, returned again and again to rueful compassion.

I shall regret causing death and misery to Muad'dib, he told himself.

He kept this benignity carefully hidden from his fellow conspirators. Such feelings told him, though, that he found it easier to identify with the victim than with the attackers – a thing characteristic of the Tleilaxu.

Scytale stood in bemused silence somewhat apart from the others. The argument about psychic poison had been going on for some time now. It was energetic and vehement, but polite in that blindly compulsive way adepts of the Great Schools always adopted for matters close to their dogma.

'When you think you have him skewered, right then you'll find him unwounded!'

That was the old Reverend Mother of the Bene Gesserit, Gaius Helen Mohiam, their hostess here on Wallach IX. She was a black-robed stick figure, a witch

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crone seated in a floater chair at Scytale's left. Her aba hood had been thrown back to expose a leathery face beneath silver hair. Deeply pocketed eyes stared out of skull-mask features.

They were using a *mirabhasa* language, honed phalange consonants and jointed vowels. It was an instrument for conveying fine emotional subtleties. Edric, the Guild Steersman, replied to the Reverend Mother now with a vocal curtsy contained in a sneer – a lovely touch of disdainful politeness.

Scytale looked at the Guild envoy. Edric swam in a container of orange gas only a few paces away. His container sat in the center of the transparent dome which the Bene Gesserit had built for this meeting. The Guildsman was an elongated figure, vaguely humanoid with finned feet and hugely fanned membraneous hands – a fish in a strange sea. His tank's vents emitted a pale orange cloud rich with the smell of the geriatric spice, melange.

'If we go on this way, we'll die of stupidity!'

That was the fourth person present – the *potential* member of the conspiracy – Princess Irulan, wife (*but not mate*, Scytale reminded himself) of their mutual foe. She stood at a corner of Edric's tank, a tall blond beauty, splendid in a robe of blue whale fur and matching hat. Gold buttons glittered at her ears. She carried herself with an aristocrat's hauteur, but something in the absorbed smoothness of her features betrayed the controls of her Bene Gesserit background.

Scytale's mind turned from nuances of language and faces to nuances of location. All around the dome lay hills mangy with melting snow which reflected mottled wet blueness from the small blue-white sun hanging at the meridian.

Why this particular place? Scytale wondered. The Bene Gesserit seldom did anything casually. Take the dome's open plan: a more conventional and confining space might've inflicted the Guildsman with claustrophobic nervousness. Inhibitions in his psyche were those of birth and life off-planet in open space.

To have built this place especially for Edric, though – what a sharp finger that pointed at his weakness.

What here, Scytale wondered, was aimed at me?

'Have you nothing to say for yourself, Scytale?' the Reverend Mother demanded.

'You wish to draw me into this fools' fight?' Scytale asked. 'Very well. We're dealing with a potential messiah. You don't launch a frontal attack upon such a one. Martyrdom would defeat us.'

They all stared at him.

'You think that's the only danger?' the Reverend Mother demanded, voice wheezing.

Scytale shrugged. He had chosen a bland, round-faced appearance for this meeting, jolly features and vapid full lips, the body of a bloated dumpling. It occurred to him now, as he studied his fellow conspirators, that he had made an ideal choice – out of instinct perhaps. He alone in this group could manipulate fleshly appearances across a wide spectrum of bodily shapes and features. He was the human chameleon, a Face Dancer, and the shape he wore now invited others to judge him too lightly.

'Well?' the Reverend Mother pressed.

'I was enjoying the silence,' Scytale said. 'Our hostilities are better left unvoiced.'

The Reverend Mother drew back, and Scytale saw her reassessing him. They were all products of profound prana-bindu training, capable of muscle and nerve control

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that few humans ever achieved. But Scytale, a Face Dancer, had muscles and nerve linkages the others didn't even possess plus a special quality of *sympatico*, a mimic's insight with which he could put on the psyche of another as well as the other's appearance.

Scytale gave her enough time to complete the reassessment, said: 'Poison!' He uttered the word with the atonals which said he alone understood its secret meaning.

The Guildsman stirred and his voice rolled from the glittering speaker globe which orbited a corner of his tank above Irulan. 'We're discussing *psychic* poison, not a physical one.'

Scytale laughed. Mirabhasa laughter could flay an opponent and he held nothing back now.

Irulan smiled in appreciation, but the corners of the Reverend Mother's eyes revealed a faint hint of anger.

'Stop that!' Mohiam rasped.

Scytale stopped, but he had their attention now, Edric in a silent rage, the Reverend Mother alert in her anger, Irulan amused but puzzled.

'Our friend Edric suggests,' Scytale said, 'that a pair of Bene Gesserit witches trained in all their subtle ways have not learned the true uses of deception.'

Mohiam turned to stare out at the cold hills of her Bene Gesserit homeworld. She was beginning to see the vital thing here, Scytale realised. That was good. Irulan, though, was another matter.

'Are you one of us or not, Scytale?' Edric asked. He stared out of tiny rodent eyes.

'My allegiance is not the issue,' Scytale said. He kept his attention on Irulan. 'You are wondering, Princess, if this was why you came all those parsecs, risked so much?'

She nodded agreement.

'Was it to bandy platitudes with a humanoid fish or dispute with a fat Tleilaxu Face Dancer?' Scytale asked.

She stepped away from Edric's tank, shaking her head in annoyance at the thick odor of melange.

Edric took this moment to pop a melange pill into his mouth. He ate the spice and breathed it and, no doubt, drank it, Scytale noted. Understandable, because the spice heightened a Steersman's prescience, gave him the power to guide a Guild heighliner across space at translight speeds. With spice awareness he found that line of the ship's future which avoided peril. Edric smelled another kind of peril now, but his crutch of prescience might not find it.

'I think it was a mistake for me to come here,' Irulan said.

The Reverend Mother turned, opened her eyes, closed them, a curiously reptilian gesture.

Scytale shifted his gaze from Irulan to the tank, inviting the Princess to share his viewpoint. She would, Scytale knew, see Edric as a repellent figure: the bold stare, those monstrous feet and hands moving softly in the gas, the smoky swirling of orange eddies around him. She would wonder about his sex habits, thinking how odd it would be to mate with such a one. Even the field-force generator which recreated for Edric the weightlessness of space would set him apart from her now.

'Princess,' Scytale said, 'because of Edric here, your husband's oracular sight cannot stumble upon certain incidents, including this one . . . presumably.'

'Presumably,' Irulan said.

Eyes closed, the Reverend Mother nodded. 'The phenomenon of prescience is poorly understood even by its initiates,' she said.

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'I am a full Guild Navigator and have the Power,' Edric said.

Again, the Reverend Mother opened her eyes. This time, she stared at the Face Dancer, eyes probing with that peculiar Bene Gesserit intensity. She was weighing minutiae.

'No, Reverend Mother,' Scytale murmured, 'I am not as simple as I appeared.'

'We don't understand this Power of second sight,' Irulan said. 'There's a point. Edric says my husband cannot see, know or predict what happens within the sphere of a Navigator's influence. But how far does that influence extend?'

'There are people and things in our universe which I know only by their effects,' Edric said, his fish mouth held in a thin line. 'I know they have been here . . . there . . . somewhere. As water creatures stir up the currents in their passage, so the prescient stir up Time. I have seen where your husband has been; never have I see him nor the people who truly share his aims and loyalties. This is the concealment which an adept gives to those who are his.'

'Irulan is not yours,' Scytale said. And he looked sideways at the Princess.

'We all know why the conspiracy must be conducted only in my presence,' Edric said.

Using the voice mode for describing a machine, Irulan said: 'You have your uses, apparently.'

She sees him now for what he is, Scytale thought. *Good!*

'The future is a thing to be shaped,' Scytale said. 'Hold that thought, Princess.'

Irulan glanced at the Face Dancer.

'People who share Paul's aims and loyalties,' she said.

'Certain of his Freman legionaries, then, wear his cloak. I have seen him prophesy for them, heard their cries of adulation for their Mahdi, their Muad'dib.'

It has occurred to her, Scytale thought, *that she is on trial here, that a judgement remains to be made which could preserve her or destroy her. She sees the trap we set for her.*

Momentarily, Scytale's gaze locked with that of the Reverend Mother and he experienced the odd realisation that they had shared this thought about Irulan. The Bene Gesserit, of course, had briefed their Princess, primed her with the *lie adroit*. But the moment always came when a Bene Gesserit must trust her own training and instincts.

'Princess, I know what it is you most desire from the Emperor,' Edric said.

'Who does not know it?' Irulan asked.

'You wish to be the founding mother of the royal dynasty,' Edric said, as though he had not heard her. 'Unless you join us, that will never happen. Take my oracular word on it. The Emperor married you for political reasons, but you'll never share his bed.'

'So the oracle is also a voyeur,' Irulan sneered.

'The Emperor is more firmly wedded to his Fremen concubine than he is to you!' Edric snapped.

'And she gives him no heir,' Irulan said.

'Reason is the first victim of strong emotion,' Scytale murmured. He sensed the outpouring of Irulan's anger, saw his admonition take effect.

'She gives him no heir,' Irulan said, her voice measuring out controlled calmness, 'because I am secretly administering a contraceptive. Is that the sort of admission you wanted from me?'

'It'd not be a thing for the Emperor to discover,' Edric said, smiling.

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'I have lies ready for him,' Irulan said. 'He may have truthsense, but some lies are easier to believe than the truth.'

'You must make the choice, Princess,' Scytale said, 'but understand what it is protects you.'

'Paul is fair with me,' she said. 'I sit in his Council.'

'In the twelve years you've been his Princess Consort,' Edric asked, 'has he shown you the slightest warmth?'

Irulan shook her head.

'He deposed your father with his infamous Fremen horde, married you to fix his claim to the throne, yet he has never crowned you Empress,' Edric said.

'Edric tries to sway you with emotion, Princess,' Scytale said. 'Is that not interesting?'

She glanced at the Face Dancer, saw the bold smile on his features, answered it with raised eyebrows. She was fully aware now, Scytale saw, that if she left this conference under Edric's sway, part of their plot, these moments might be concealed from Paul's oracular vision. If she withheld commitment, though . . .

'Does it seem to you, Princess,' Scytale asked, 'that Edric holds undue sway in our conspiracy?'

'I've already agreed,' Edric said, 'that I'll defer to the best judgement offered in our councils.'

'And who chooses the best judgement?' Scytale asked.

'Do you wish the Princess to leave here without joining us?' Edric asked.

'He wishes her commitment to be a real one,' the Reverend Mother growled. 'There should be no trickery between us.'

Irulan, Scytale saw, had relaxed into a thinking posture, hands concealed in the sleeves of her robe. She would be thinking now of the bait Edric had offered: *to found a royal dynasty!* She would be wondering what scheme the conspirators had provided to protect themselves from her. She would be weighing many things.

'Scytale,' Irulan said presently, 'it is said that you Tleilaxu have an odd system of honour: your victims must always have a means of escape.'

'If they can but find it,' Scytale agreed.

'Am I a victim?' Irulan asked.

A burst of laughter escaped Scytale.

The Reverend Mother snorted.

'Princess,' Edric said, his voice softly persuasive, 'you already are one of us, have no fear of that. Do you not spy upon the Imperial Household for your Bene Gesserit superiors?'

'Paul knows I report to my teachers,' she said.

'But don't you give them the material for strong propaganda against your Emperor?' Edric asked.

Not 'our' Emperor, Scytale noted. *'Your' Emperor, Irulan is too much the Bene Gesserit to miss that slip.*

'The question is one of powers and how they may be used,' Scytale said, moving closer to the Guildsman's tank. 'We of the Tleilaxu believe that in all the universe there is only the insatiable appetite of matter, that energy is the only true *solid.* And energy learns. Hear me well, Princess: energy learns. This, we call power.'

'You haven't convinced me we can defeat the Emperor,' Irulan said.

'We haven't even convinced ourselves,' Scytale said.

'Everywhere we turn,' Irulan said, 'his power confronts us. He's the kwisatz haderach, the one who can be many places at once. He's the Mahdi whose merest whim is absolute command to his Qizarate missionaries. He's the mentat whose computational mind surpasses the greatest

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ancient computers. He is Muad'dib whose orders to the Fremen legions depopulate planets. He possesses oracular vision which sees into the future. He has that gene pattern which we Bene Gesserits covet for—'

'We know his attributes,' the Reverend Mother interrupted. 'And we know the abomination, his sister Alia, possesses this pattern. But they're also humans, both of them. Thus, they have weaknesses.'

'And where are those human weaknesses?' the Face Dancer asked. 'Shall we search for them in the religious arm of his Jihad? Can the Emperor's Qizara be turned against him? What about the civil authority of the Great Houses? Can the Landsraad Congress do more than raise a verbal clamour?'

'I suggest the Combine Honnete Ober Advancer Mercantiles,' Edric said, turning in his tank. 'CHOAM is business and business follows profits.'

'Or perhaps the Emperor's mother,' Scytale said. 'The Lady Jessica, I understand, remains on Caladan, but is in frequent communication with her son.'

'That traitorous bitch,' Mohiam said, voice level. 'Would I might disown my own hands which trained her.'

'Our conspiracy requires a level,' Scytale said.

'We are more than conspirators,' the Reverend Mother countered.

'Ah, yes,' Scytale agreed. 'We are energetic and we learn quickly. This makes us the one true hope, the certain salvation of humankind.' He spoke in the speech mode for absolute conviction, which was perhaps the ultimate sneer coming, as it did, from a Tleilaxu.

Only the Reverend Mother appeared to understand the subtlety. 'Why?' she asked, directing the question at Scytale.

Before the Face Dancer could answer, Edric cleared his throat, said: 'Let us not bandy philosophical nonsense. Every question can be boiled down to the one: "Why is there anything?" Every religious, business and governmental question has the single derivative: "Who will exercise the power?" Alliances, combines, complexes, they all chase mirages unless they go for the power. All else is nonsense, as most thinking beings come to realise.'

Scytale shrugged, a gesture designed solely for the Reverend Mother. Edric had answered her question for him. The pontificating fool was their major weakness. To make sure the Reverend Mother understood, Scytale said: 'Listening carefully to the teacher, one acquires an education.'

The Reverend Mother nodded slowly.

'Princess,' Edric said, 'make your choice. You have been chosen as an instrument of destiny, the very finest . . .'

'Save your praise for those who can be swayed by it,' Irulan said. 'Earlier, you mentioned a ghost, a revenant with which we may contaminate the Emperor. Explain this.'

'The Atreides will defeat himself!' Edric crowed.

'Stop talking riddles!' Irulan snapped. 'What is this ghost?'

'A very unusual ghost,' Edric said. 'It has a body and a name. The body – that's the flesh of a renowned swordmaster known as Duncan Idaho. The name . . .'

'Idaho's dead,' Irulan said. 'Paul has mourned the loss often in my presence. He saw Idaho killed by my father's Sardaukar.'

'Even in defeat,' Edric said, 'your father's Sardaukar did not abandon wisdom. Let us suppose a wise Sardaukar