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By Frank Herbert

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The Best of Frank Herbert: 1965–1970 (1977)
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Eye (1985)

God Emperor of Dune

FRANK HERBERT



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PROLOGUE

Excerpt from the speech by Hadi Benotto announcing the discoveries at Dar-es-Balat on the planet of Rakis:

It not only is my pleasure to announce to you this morning our discovery of this marvellous storehouse containing, among other things, a monumental collection of manuscripts inscribed on ridulian crystal paper, but I also take pride in giving you our arguments for the authenticity of our discoveries, to tell you why we believe we have uncovered the original journals of Leto II, the God Emperor.

First, let me recall to you the historical treasure which we all know by the name of *The Stolen Journals*, those volumes of known antiquity which over the centuries have been so valuable in helping us to understand our ancestors. As you all know, *The Stolen Journals* were deciphered by the Spacing Guild, and the method of the Guild Key was employed to translate these newly discovered volumes. No one denies the antiquity of the Guild Key and it, *and it alone*, translates these volumes.

Second, these volumes were printed by an Ixian dictatel of truly ancient make. *The Stolen Journals* leave no doubt that this was in fact the method employed by Leto II to record his historical observations.

Third, and we believe that this is equal in portent to the actual discovery, there is the storehouse itself. The repository for these *journals* is an undoubted Ixian artifact of such primitive and yet marvellous construction that it is sure to throw new light on the historical epoch known as 'The Scattering'. As was to be expected, the storehouse was invisible. It was buried far deeper

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than myth and the Oral History had led us to expect and it emitted and absorbed radiation to simulate the natural character of its surroundings, a mechanical mimesis which is not surprising of itself. What has surprised our engineers, however, is the way this was done with the most rudimentary and truly primitive mechanical skills.

I can see that some of you are as excited by this as we were. We believe we are looking at the first Ixian Globe, the no-room from which all such devices evolved. If it is not actually the first, we believe it must be *one* of the first and embodying the same principles as the first.

Let me address your obvious curiosity by assuring you that we will take you on a brief tour of the storehouse presently. We will ask only that you maintain silence while within the storehouse because our engineers and other specialists are still at work there unravelling the mysteries.

Which brings me to my fourth point, and this may well be the capstone of our discoveries. It is with emotions difficult to describe that I reveal to you now another discovery at this site – namely, actual oral recordings which are labelled as having been made by Leto II in the voice of his father, Paul-Muad'Dib. Since authenticated recordings of the God Emperor are lodged in the Bene Gesserit Archives, we have sent a sampling of our recordings, all of which were made on an ancient microbubble system, to the Sisterhood with a formal request that they conduct a comparison test. We have little doubt that the recordings will be authenticated.

Now, please turn your attention to the translated excerpts which were handed to you as you entered. Let me take this opportunity to apologize for their weight. I have heard some of you joking about that. We used ordinary paper for a practical reason – economy. The original volumes are inscribed in symbols so small that they must be magnified substantially before they can be read. In fact, it requires more than forty ordinary volumes of the type you now hold just to reprint the contents of one of the ridulian crystal originals.

If the projector – yes. We are now projecting part of an original page on to the screen at your left. This is from the first

page of the first volume. Our translation is on the screens to the right. I call your attention to the internal evidence, the poetic vanity of the words as well as the meaning derived from the translation. The style conveys a personality which is identifiable and consistent. We believe that this could only have been written by someone who had the direct experience of ancestral memories, by someone labouring to share that extraordinary experience of previous lives in a way that could be understood by those not so gifted.

Look now at the actual meaning content. All of the references accord with everything history has told us about the one person whom we believe is the only person who could have written such an account.

We have another surprise for you now. I have taken the liberty of inviting the well-known poet, Rebeth Vreeb, to share the platform with us this morning and to read from this first page a short passage of our translation. It is our observation that, even in translation, these words take on a different character when read aloud. We want to share with you a truly extraordinary quality which we have discovered in these volumes.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Rebeth Vreeb.

From the reading by Rebeth Vreeb:

I assure you that I am the book of fate.

Questions are my enemies. For my questions explode! Answers leap up like a frightened flock, blackening the sky of my inescapable memories. Not one answer, not one suffices.

What prisms flash when I enter the terrible field of my past. I am a chip of shattered flint enclosed in a box. The box gyrates and quakes. I am tossed about in a storm of mysteries. And when the box opens, I return to this presence like a stranger in a primitive land.

Slowly (slowly, I say) I relearn my name.

But that is not to know myself!

This person of my name, this Leto who is the second of that calling, finds other voices in his mind, other names and

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other places. Oh, I promise you (as I have been promised) that I answer to but a single name. If you say, 'Leto', I respond. Sufferance makes this true, sufferance and one thing more:

I hold the threads!

All of them are mine. Let me but imagine a topic – say . . . *men who have died by the sword* – and I have them in all of their gore, every image intact, every moan, every grimace.

Joys of motherhood, I think, and the birthing beds are mine. Serial baby smiles and the sweet cooings of new generations. The first walkings of the toddlers and the first victories of youths brought forth for me to share. They tumble one upon another until I can see little else but sameness and repetition.

'Keep it all intact,' I warn myself.

Who can deny the value of such experiences, the worth of learning through which I view each new instant?

Ahhh, but it's the past.

Don't you understand?

It's only the past!

> This morning I was born in a yurt at the edge of a horse-plain in a land of a planet which no longer exists. Tomorrow I will be born someone else in another place. I have not yet chosen. This morning, though – ahh, this life! When my eyes had learned to focus, I looked out at sunshine on trampled grass and I saw vigorous people going about the sweet activities of their lives. Where . . . oh where has all of that vigour gone?
>
> —The Stolen Journals

The three people running northward through moon shadows in the Forbidden Forest were strung out along almost half a kilometre. The last runner in the line ran less than a hundred metres ahead of the pursuing D-wolves. The animals could be heard yelping and panting in their eagerness, the way they do when they have the prey in sight.

With First Moon almost directly overhead, it was quite light in the forest and, although these were the higher latitudes of Arrakis, it was still warm from the heat of a summer day. The nightly drift of air from the Last Desert of the Sareer carried resin smells and the damp exhalations of the duff underfoot. Now and again, a breeze from the Kynes Sea beyond the Sareer drifted across the runners' tracks with hints of salt and fishes.

By a quirk of fate, the last runner was called Ulot, which in the Fremen tongue means *Beloved Straggler.* Ulot was short in stature and with a tendency to fat which had placed an extra dieting burden on him in training for this venture. Even when slimmed down for their desperate run, his face remained round, the large brown eyes vulnerable in that suggestion of too much flesh.

To Ulot it was obvious that he could not run much farther. He panted and wheezed. Occasionally, he staggered. But he did not call out to his companions. He knew they could not help him. All of them had taken the same oath, knowing they had no defences except the old virtues and Fremen loyalties. This remained true

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even though everything that once had been Fremen had now a museum quality – rote recitals learned from Museum Fremen.

It was Fremen loyalty that kept Ulot silent in the full awareness of his doom. A fine display of the ancient qualities, and rather pitiful when none of the runners had any but book knowledge and the legends of the Oral History about the virtues they aped.

The D-wolves ran close behind Ulot, giant grey figures almost man-height at the shoulders. They leaped and whined in their eagerness, heads lifted, eyes focused on the moon-betrayed figure of their quarry.

A root caught Ulot's left foot and he almost fell. This gave him renewed energy. He put on a burst of speed, gaining perhaps a wolf-length on his pursuers. His arms pumped. He breathed noisily through his open mouth.

The D-wolves did not change pace. They were silver shadows which went flick-flick through the loud green smells of their forest. They knew they had won. It was a familiar experience.

Again, Ulot stumbled. He caught his balance against a sapling and continued his panting flight, gasping, his legs trembling in rebellion against these demands. No energy remained for another burst of speed.

One of the D-wolves, a large female, moved out on Ulot's left flank. She swerved inward and leaped across his path. Giant fangs ripped Ulot's shoulder and staggered him but he did not fall. The pungency of blood was added to the forest smells. A smaller male caught his right hip and at last Ulot fell, screaming. The pack pounced and his screams were cut off in abrupt finality.

Not stopping to feed, the D-wolves again took up the chase. Their noses probed the forest floor and the vagrant eddies in the air, scenting the warm tracery of two more running humans.

The next runner in the line was named Kwuteg, an old and honourable name on Arrakis, a name from the Dune times. An ancestor had served Sietch Tabr as Master of the Death Stills, but that was more than three thousand years lost in a past which many no longer believed. Kwuteg ran with the long strides of a tall and slender body which seemed perfectly fitted to such exertion. Long black hair streamed back from his aquiline

features. As with his companions, he wore a black running suit of tightly knitted cotton. It revealed the workings of his buttocks and stringy thighs, the deep and steady rhythm of his breathing. Only his pace, which was markedly slow for Kwuteg, betrayed the fact that he had injured his right knee coming down from the man-made precipices which girdled the God Emperor's Citadel fortress in the Sareer.

Kwuteg heard Ulot's screams, the abrupt and potent silence, then the renewed chase-yelps of the D-wolves. He tried not to let his mind create the image of another friend being slain by Leto's monster guardians but imagination worked its sorcery on him. Kwuteg thought a curse against the tyrant but wasted no breath to voice it. There remained a chance that he could reach the sanctuary of the Idaho River. Kwuteg knew what his friends thought about him – even Siona. He had always been known as a conservative. Even as a child he had saved his energy until it counted most, parcelling out his reserves like a miser.

In spite of the injured knee, Kwuteg increased his pace. He knew the river was near. His injury had gone beyond agony into a steady flame which filled his entire leg and side with its burning. He knew the limits of his endurance. He knew also that Siona should be almost at the water. The fastest runner of them all, she carried the sealed packet – and, in it, the things they had stolen from the fortress in the Sareer. Kwuteg focused his thoughts on that packet as he ran.

Save it, Siona! Use it to destroy him!

The eager whining of the D-wolves penetrated Kwuteg's consciousness. They were too close. He knew then that he would not escape.

But Siona must escape!

He risked a backward glance and saw one of the wolves move to flank him. The pattern of their attack plan imprinted itself on his awareness. As the flanking wolf leaped Kwuteg also leaped. Placing a tree between himself and the pack, he ducked beneath the flanking wolf, grasped one of its hind legs in both hands and, without stopping, whirled the captive wolf as a flail which scattered the others. Finding the creature not as heavy as he had expected, almost welcoming the change of action, he flailed his

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living bludgeon at the attackers in a dervish whirl which brought two of them down in a crash of skulls. But he could not guard every side. A lean male caught him in the back, hurling him against a tree and he lost his bludgeon.

'Go!' he screamed.

The pack bored in and Kwuteg caught the throat of the lean male in his teeth. He bit down with every gramme of his final desperation. Wolf blood spurted over his face, blinding him. Rolling without any knowledge of where he went, Kwuteg grappled another wolf. Part of the pack dissolved into a yelping, whirling mob, some turning against their own injured. Most of the pack remained intent on the quarry, though. Teeth ripped Kwuteg's throat from both sides.

Siona, too, had heard Ulot scream, then the unmistakable silence followed by the yelping of the pack as the wolves resumed the chase. Such anger filled her that she felt she might explode with it. Ulot had been included in this venture because of his analytical ability, his way of seeing a whole from only a few parts. It had been Ulot who, taking the inevitable magnifier from his kit, had examined the two strange volumes they had found in with the Citadel's plans.

'I think it's a cipher,' Ulot had said.

And Radi, poor Radi who had been the first of their team to die... Radi had said, 'We can't afford the extra weight. Throw them away.'

Ulot had objected: 'Unimportant things aren't concealed this way.'

Kwuteg had joined Radi. 'We came for the Citadel plans and we have them. Those things are too heavy.'

But Siona had agreed with Ulot. 'I will carry them.'

That had ended the argument.

Poor Ulot.

They had all known him as the worst runner in the team. Ulot was slow in most things, but the clarity of his mind could not be denied.

He is trustworthy.

Ulot *had been* trustworthy.

Siona mastered her anger and used its energy to increase her

pace. Trees whipped past her in the moonlight. She had entered that timeless void of the running when there was nothing else but her own movements, her own body doing what it had been conditioned to do.

Men thought her beautiful when she ran. Siona knew this. Her long dark hair was tied tightly to keep it from whipping in the wind of her passage. She had accused Kwuteg of foolishness when he had refused to copy her style.

Where is Kwuteg?

Her hair was not like Kwuteg's. It was that deep brown which is sometimes confused with black, but is not truly black, not like Kwuteg's at all.

In the way genes occasionally do, her features copied those of a long dead ancestor: gently oval and with a generous mouth, eyes of alert awareness above a small nose. Her body had grown lanky from years of running, but it sent strong sexual signals to the males around her.

Where is Kwuteg?

The wolf pack had fallen silent and this filled her with alarm. They had done that before bringing down Radi. It had been the same when they got Setuse.

She told herself the silence could mean other things. Kwuteg, too, was silent... and strong. The injury had not appeared to bother him too much.

Siona began to feel pain in her chest, the gasping-to-come which she knew well from the long kilometres of training. Perspiration still poured down her body under the thin black running garment. The kit with its precious contents sealed against the river passage ahead rode high on her back. She thought about the Citadel charts folded there.

Where does Leto hide his hoard of spice?

It had to be somewhere within the Citadel. It had to be. Somewhere in the charts there would be a clue. The melange-spice for which the Bene Gesserit, the Guild and all the others hungered... that was a prize worth this risk.

And those two cryptic volumes. Kwuteg had been right in one thing. Ridulian crystal paper was heavy. But she shared Ulot's

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excitement. Something important was concealed in those lines of cipher.

Once more the eager chase-yelps of the wolves sounded in the forest behind her.

Run, Kwuteg! Run!

Now, just ahead of her through the trees, she could see the wide cleared strip which bordered the Idaho River. She glimpsed moon brightness on water beyond the clearing.

Run, Kwuteg!

She longed for a sound from Kwuteg, any sound. Only the two of them remained now from the eleven who had started the run. Nine had paid for this venture with their lives: *Radi, Aline, Ulot, Setuse, Inineg, Onemao, Hutye, Memar and Oala.*

Siona thought their names and with each sent a silent prayer to the old gods, not to the tyrant Leto. Especially, she prayed to Shai-Hulud.

I pray to Shai-Hulud who lives in the sand.

Abruptly, she was out of the forest and on to the moon-bright stretch of mowed ground along the river. Straight ahead beyond a narrow shingle of beach, the water beckoned to her. The beach was silver against the oily flow.

A loud yell from back in the trees almost made her falter. She recognized Kwuteg's voice above the wild wolf sounds. Kwuteg called out to her without name, an unmistakable cry with one word containing countless conversations – a message of death and life.

'Go!'

The pack sounds took on a terrible commotion of frenzied yelps, but nothing more from Kwuteg. She knew then how Kwuteg was spending the last energies of his life.

Delaying them to help me escape.

Obeying Kwuteg's cry, she dashed to the river's edge and plunged headfirst into the water. The river was a freezing shock after the heat of the run. It stunned her for a moment and she floundered outward, struggling to swim and regain her breath. The precious kit floated and bumped against the back of her head.

The Idaho River was not wide here, no more than fifty

metres, a gently sweeping curve with sandy indentations fringed by roots and shelving banks of lush reeds and grass where the water refused to stay in the straight lines Leto's engineers had designed. Siona was strengthened by the knowledge that the D-wolves had been conditioned to stop at the water. Their territorial boundaries had been drawn, the river on this side and the desert wall on the other side. Still, she swam the last few metres underwater and surfaced in the shadows of a cutbank before turning and looking back.

The wolf pack stood ranged along the bank, all except one which had come down to the river's edge. It leaned forward with its forefeet almost into the flow. She heard it whine.

Siona knew the wolf saw her. No doubt of that. D-wolves were noted for their keen eyesight. There were Gaze Hounds in the ancestry of Leto's forest guardians and he bred the wolves for their eyesight. She wondered if this once the wolves might break through their conditioning. They were mostly sight-hunters. If that one wolf at the river's edge should enter the water, all might follow. Siona held her breath. She felt the dragging of exhaustion. They had come almost thirty kilometres, the last half of it with the D-wolves close behind.

The wolf at the river's edge whined once more then leaped back up to its companions. At some silent signal they turned and loped into the forest.

Siona knew where they would go. D-wolves were allowed to eat anything they brought down in the Forbidden Forest. Everyone knew this. It was why the wolves roamed the forest – the guardians of the Sareer.

'You'll pay for this, Leto,' she whispered. It was a low sound, her voice, very close to the quiet rustling of the water against the reeds just behind her. 'You'll pay for Ulot, for Kwuteg and for all the others. You'll pay.'

She pushed outward gently and drifted with the current until her feet met the first shelving of a narrow beach. Slowly, her body dragged down by fatigue, she climbed from the water and paused to check that the sealed contents of her kit had remained dry. The seal was unbroken. She stared at it a moment in the moonlight, then lifted her gaze to the forest wall across the river.