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FRANK HERBERT

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The authorised representative in the EEA is Hachette Ireland,
8 Castlecourt Centre, Dublin 15, D15 XTP3, Ireland (email: info@hbgi.ie)

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PROLOGUE

In the name of our Bene Gesserit Order and its unbroken Sisterhood, this account has been judged reliable and worthy of entry into the Chronicles of the Chapter House.

This well-recognized prescript has been tossed into limbo by the words and actions of the Bashar Miles Teg, the last person in the universe we might have suspected capable of such a revelation.

What opened Teg's eyes? He says it was his encounter with a captive soldier from the Scattering, taken on Gammu and subjected to heavy interrogation. The man called upon the Great God Dur (Archives ref: 'Guldur', another name for the Tyrant) to fill his captors' pockets with jewels if they would restore him to the Honoured Matres.

Teg, mindful of the Missionaria Protectiva's workings, wondered aloud if this prayer had ever been answered. Teg thought that this question would bring a call by the captive for Dur's wrath to fall upon his enemies.

Instead, the captive was amused. He appeared to think about it for a moment and then said that no one in his acquaintance had ever been answered with jewels.

'Would you want such a divine response?' Teg asked, probing for the man's real beliefs.

'It would frighten me,' the captive said. 'Too many would ask for their share.'

Teg's account relates that he immediately saw through to this man's granular universe, becoming fully aware of how that construct was perfectly submissive to the choices of the believer.

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It was a matter of faith. The universe was that way because the believer chose to view it that way.

'I saw immediately that it was the same for me and for everyone I had ever met,' Teg tells us, adding that he recognized in that instant the true nature of the Mother Superior Taraza's design for the ghola and for Rakis.

Teg's revelation focused his attention on fixed accounts of historical events. He was reminded of our teaching that exotic ideas embedded in particular languages require those languages for expression. Translation always falters without the original mode of expression. The fixed accounts, he said, mostly divert attention from the secret influences around the recorded events. He calls this 'stage-managed history'.

We have often remarked how easily the major historians can be lured into furthering the aims of those who would divert attention. I remind you of how the Tyrant killed the historians who angered him for this very reason.

The ease with which historians can be captivated is explained in part by the fact that bloody events exert a magnetic attraction on humankind. Historians are no exception. They cater to that ancient human desire you see manifested in the mobs gawking at executions or people stopping to stare at the scene of an accident.

Historians have the added incentive that catering to this bloody attraction often produces wealth and power. It is popular. Digging deeply into obscure events and the secret machinations of unknown people is not only more difficult, it is observably dangerous to careers if not to lives. Such activity seldom produces historical works which attract popular approval. Even when such revelatory works do appear, they have a way of vanishing, along with their authors. This is but an extension of what our Order calls 'the constant conflict'. The stakes in conflicts do not change. Battle determines who will control the wealth or its equivalent.

Teg reminds us of what we already knew but did not apply fully to ourselves. We of the Sisterhood are miners digging ever deeper into veins of human complexity. We know very well that

appearance, stature, bodily shape and colour – none of these things necessarily signals human worth or human intelligence.

No person or society is ever a pinnacle. Evolution does not end short of death for an entire species. The fixed pattern of the seasons has been imposed on countless planets but few have dared a perpetual springtime, or even a perpetual summer. Lack of change creates boredom. Those who are bored become unruly.

Did the Tyrant not warn us?

'I am anthropology,' he said. 'Study me and you will see why no argument justifies any belief in the natural superiority of your own kind. Individuals may be superior. Some societies may demonstrate superiority. But all is transient.'

Do not tell me you understand this! If you dare say that I will throw the Zensunni Warning into your faces!

'Assumptions built on ideas of "understanding" assail us from all sides. Such assumptions place a faith in words stronger than that promoted by the organized religions. It is a faith seldom questioned. The very act of saying that things exist which cannot be described shakes a universe where words and the systems for sharing and transmitting them are the ultimate god.'

Systems, my Sisters! There is the heart of Teg's revelation. Rank and social position may be at the core of all social evolution but *systematic* remains a dangerous word. Systems, following the unconscious patterns of their human creators, always take over. It is our systems which have brought us to our present sorry state! But we still have that deathless choice: degenerate or overcome our adversities!

— Mother Superior Darwi Odrade,
Argument in Council

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> Most discipline is hidden discipline, designed not to liberate but to limit. Do not ask *Why?* Be cautious with *How? Why?* leads inexorably to paradox. *How?* traps you in a universe of cause and effect. Both deny the infinite.
>
> —The Apocrypha of Arrakis

'Taraza told you, did she not, that we have gone through eleven of these Duncan Idaho gholas? This one is the twelfth.'

The old Reverend Mother Schwangyu spoke with deliberate bitterness as she looked down from the third-storey parapet at the lone child playing on the enclosed lawn. The planet Gammu's bright midday sunlight bounced off the white courtyard walls filling the area beneath them with brilliance as though a spotlight had been directed onto the young ghola.

Gone through! the Reverend Mother Lucilla thought. She allowed herself a short nod, thinking how coldly impersonal were Schwangyu's manner and choice of words. *We have used up our supply; send us more!*

The child on the lawn appeared to be about twelve standard years of age, but appearance could be deceptive with a ghola not yet awakened to his original memories. The child took that moment to look up at the watchers above him. He was a sturdy figure with a direct gaze which focused intently from beneath a black cap of karakul hair. The yellow sunlight of early spring cast a small shadow at his feet. His skin was darkly tanned but a slight movement of his body shifted his blue singlesuit revealing pale skin at the left shoulder.

'Not only are these gholas costly but they are supremely dangerous to us,' Schwangyu said. Her voice came out flat and emotionless, all the more powerful because of that. It was the voice of a Reverend Mother Instructor speaking down to an acolyte and it emphasized for Lucilla that Schwangyu was one of those who protested openly against the ghola project.

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Taraza had warned: 'She will try to win you over.'

'Eleven failures are enough,' Schwangyu said.

Lucilla glanced at Schwangyu's wrinkled features, thinking suddenly: *Someday I may be old and wizened, too. And perhaps I will be a power in the Bene Gesserit as well.*

Schwangyu was a small woman with many age marks earned in the Sisterhood's affairs. Lucilla knew from her own assignment-studies that Schwangyu's conventional black robe concealed a skinny figure which few other than her acolyte dressers and the males bred to her had ever seen. Schwangyu's mouth was wide, the lower lip constricted by the age lines which fanned into a jutting chin. Her manner tended to a curt abruptness which the uninitiated often interpreted as anger. The commander of the Gammu Keep was one who kept herself to herself more than most Reverend Mothers.

Once more, Lucilla wished she knew the entire scope of the ghola project. Taraza had drawn the dividing line clearly enough, though: 'Schwangyu is not to be trusted where the safety of the ghola is concerned.'

'We think the Tleilaxu themselves killed most of the previous eleven,' Schwangyu said. 'That in itself should tell us something.'

Matching Schwangyu's manner, Lucilla adopted a quiet attitude of almost emotionless waiting. Her manner said: 'I may be much younger than you, Schwangyu, but I, too, am a full Reverend Mother.' She could feel Schwangyu's gaze.

Schwangyu had seen the holos of this Lucilla but the woman in the flesh was more disconcerting. An Imprinter of the best training, no doubt of it. Blue-in-blue eyes uncorrected by any lens gave Lucilla a piercing expression which went with her long oval face. With the hood of her black aba robe thrown back as it was now, brown hair was revealed, drawn into a tight barrette and then cascading down her back. Not even the stiffest robe could completely hide Lucilla's ample breasts. She was from a genetic line famous for its motherly nature and she already had borne three children for the Sisterhood, two by the same sire. Yes – a brown-haired charmer with full breasts and a motherly disposition.

'You say very little,' Schwangyu said. 'This tells me that Taraza has warned you against me.'

'Do you have reason to believe assassins will try to kill this twelfth ghola?' Lucilla asked.

'They already have tried.'

Strange how the word 'heresy' came to mind when thinking of Schwangyu, Lucilla thought. Could there be heresy among the Reverend Mothers? The religious overtones of the word seemed out of place in a Bene Gesserit context. How could there be heretical movements among people who held a profoundly manipulative attitude toward all things religious?

Lucilla shifted her attention down to the ghola who took this moment to perform a series of cartwheels which brought him around full circle until he once more stood looking up at the two observers on the parapet.

'How prettily he performs!' Schwangyu sneered. The old voice did not completely mask an underlying violence.

Lucilla glanced at Schwangyu. *Heresy.* Dissidence was not the proper word. Opposition did not cover what could be sensed in the older woman. This was something which could shatter the Bene Gesserit. Revolt against Taraza, against the Reverend Mother Superior? Unthinkable! Mother Superiors were cast in the mould of monarch. Once Taraza had accepted counsel and advice and *then* made her decision, the Sisters were committed to obedience.

'This is no time to be creating new problems!' Schwangyu said.

Her meaning was clear. People from the Scattering were coming back and the intent of some among those Lost Ones threatened the Sisterhood. *Honoured Matres!* How like 'Reverend Mothers' the words sounded.

Lucilla ventured an exploratory sally: 'So you think we should be concentrating on the problem of those Honoured Matres from the Scattering?'

'Concentrating? Hah! They do not have our powers. They do not show good sense. And they do not have mastery of melange! That is what they want from us, our spice knowledge.'

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'Perhaps,' Lucilla agreed. She was not willing to concede this on the scanty evidence.

'Mother Superior Taraza has taken leave of her senses to dally with this ghola thing now,' Schwangyu said.

Lucilla remained silent. The ghola project definitely had touched an old nerve among the Sisters. The possibility, even remote, that they might arouse another kwisatz haderach sent shudders of angry fear through the ranks. To meddle with the worm-bound remnants of the Tyrant! That was dangerous in the extreme.

'We should never take that ghola to Rakis,' Schwangyu muttered. 'Let sleeping worms lie.'

Lucilla gave her attention once more to the ghola-child. He had turned his back on the high parapet with its two Reverend Mothers but something about his posture said he knew they discussed him and he awaited their response.

'You doubtless realize that you have been called in while he is yet too young,' Schwangyu said.

'I have never heard of the deep imprinting on one that young,' Lucilla agreed. She allowed something softly self-mocking in her tone, a thing she knew Schwangyu would hear and misinterpret. How you managed procreation and all of its attendant necessities, that was the Bene Gesserit ultimate speciality. Use love but avoid it, Schwangyu would be thinking now. The Sisterhood's analysts knew the roots of love. They had examined this quite early in their development but had never dared breed it out of those they influenced. Tolerate love but guard against it, that was the rule. Know that it lay deep within the human genetic makeup, a safety net to ensure continuation of the species. You used it where necessary, imprinting selected individuals (sometimes upon each other) for the Sisterhood's purposes, knowing then that such individuals would be linked by powerful bonding lines not readily available to the common awareness. Others might observe such linkages and plot the consequences but the linked ones would dance to unconscious music.

'I was not suggesting that it's a mistake to imprint him,' Schwangyu said, misreading Lucilla's silence.

'We do what we are ordered to do,' Lucilla chided. Let Schwangyu make of that what she would.

'Then you do not object to taking the ghola to Rakis,' Schwangyu said. 'I wonder if you would continue such unquestioning obedience if you knew the full story?'

Lucilla inhaled a deep breath. Was the entire design for the Duncan Idaho gholas to be shared with her now?

'There is a female child named Sheeana Brugh on Rakis,' Schwangyu said. 'She can control the giant worms.'

Lucilla concealed her alertness. *Giant worms. Not Shai-hulud. Not Shaitan. Giant worms.* The sandrider predicted by the Tyrant had appeared at last!

'I do not make idle chatter,' Schwangyu said when Lucilla continued silent.

Indeed not, Lucilla thought. *And you call a thing by its descriptive label, not by the name of its mystical import. Giant worms. And you're really thinking about the Tyrant, Leto II, whose endless dream is carried as a pearl of awareness in each of those worms. Or so we are led to believe.*

Schwangyu nodded toward the child on the lawn below them. 'Do you think their ghola will be able to influence the girl who controls the worms?'

We're peeling away the skin at last, Lucilla thought. She said: 'I have no need for the answer to such a question.'

'You *are* a cautious one,' Schwangyu said.

Lucilla arched her back and stretched. *Cautious? Yes, indeed!* Taraza had warned her: 'Where Schwangyu is concerned, you must act with extreme caution but with speed. We have a very narrow window of time within which we can succeed.'

Succeed at what? Lucilla wondered. She glanced sideways at Schwangyu. 'I don't see how the Tleilaxu could succeed in killing eleven of these gholas. How could they get through our defences?'

'We have the Bashar now,' Schwangyu said. 'Perhaps he can prevent disaster.' Her tone said she did not believe this.

Mother Superior Taraza had said: 'You are the Imprinter, Lucilla. When you get to Gammu you will recognize some of the pattern. But your task requires no need for the full design.'

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'Think of the cost!' Schwangyu said, glaring down at the ghola, who now squatted, pulling at tufts of grass.

Cost had nothing to do with it, Lucilla knew. The open admission of failure was much more important. The Sisterhood could not reveal its fallibility. But the fact that an Imprinter had been summoned early – that was vital. Taraza had known the Imprinter would see this and recognize part of the pattern.

Schwangyu gestured with one bony hand at the child, who had returned to his solitary play, running and tumbling on the grass.

'Politics,' Schwangyu said.

No doubt Sisterhood politics lay at the core of Schwangyu's *heresy*, Lucilla thought. The delicacy of the internal argument could be deduced from the fact that Schwangyu had been put in charge of the Keep here on Gammu. Those who opposed Taraza refused to sit on the sidelines.

Schwangyu turned and looked squarely at Lucilla. Enough had been said. Enough had been heard and screened through minds trained in Bene Gesserit awareness. The Chapter House had chosen this Lucilla with great care.

Lucilla felt the older woman's careful examination but refused to let this touch that innermost sense of purpose upon which every Reverend Mother could rely in times of stress. *Here. Let her look fully upon me.* Lucilla turned and set her mouth in a soft smile, passing her gaze across the rooftop opposite them.

A uniformed man armed with a heavy-duty lasgun appeared there, looked once at the two Reverend Mothers and then focused on the child below them.

'Who is that?' Lucilla asked.

'Patrin, the Bashar's most trusted aide. Says he's only the Bashar's batman but you'd have to be blind and a fool to believe that.'

Lucilla examined the man across from them with care. So that was Patrin. A native of Gammu, Taraza had said. Chosen for this task by the Bashar himself. Thin and blond, much too old now to be soldiering, but then the Bashar had been called back from retirement and had insisted Patrin must share this duty.

Schwangyu noted the way Lucilla shifted her attention from Patrin to the ghola with real concern. Yes, if the Bashar had

been called back to guard this Keep, then the ghola was in extreme peril.

Lucilla started in sudden surprise. 'Why . . . he's . . .'

'Miles Teg's orders,' Schwangyu said, naming the Bashar. 'All of the ghola's play is training play. Muscles are to be prepared for the day when he is restored to his original self.'

'But that's no simple exercise he's doing down there,' Lucilla said. She felt her own muscles respond sympathetically to the remembered training.

'We hold back only the Sisterhood's arcana from this ghola,' Schwangyu said. 'Almost anything else in our storehouse of knowledge can be his.' Her tone said she found this extremely objectionable.

'Surely, no one believes this ghola could become another kwisatz haderach,' Lucilla objected.

Schwangyu merely shrugged.

Lucilla held herself quite still, thinking. Was it possible the ghola could be transformed into a male version of a Reverend Mother? Could this Duncan Idaho learn to look inward where no Reverend Mother dared?

Schwangyu began to speak, her voice almost a growling mutter: 'The design of this project . . . they have a dangerous plan. They could make the same mistake . . .' She broke off.

They, Lucilla thought. *Their ghola.*

'I would give a pretty to know for sure the position of Ix and the Fish Speakers in this,' Lucilla said.

'Fish Speakers!' Schwangyu shook her head at the very thought of the remnant female army which had once served only the Tyrant. 'They believe in truth and justice.'

Lucilla overcame a sudden tightness in her throat. Schwangyu had all but declared open opposition. Yet, she commanded here. The political rule was a simple one: those who opposed the project must monitor it that they might abort it at the first sign of trouble. But that was a genuine Duncan Idaho ghola down there on the lawn. Cell comparisons and Truthsayers had confirmed it.

Taraza had said: 'You are to teach him love in all of its forms.'

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'He's so young,' Lucilla said, keeping her attention on the ghola.

'Young, yes,' Schwangyu said. 'So, for now, I presume you will awaken his childish responses to maternal affection. Later . . .' Schwangyu shrugged.

Lucilla betrayed no emotional reaction. A Bene Gesserit obeyed. *I am an Imprinter. So . . .* Taraza's orders and the Imprinter's specialized training defined a particular course of events.

To Schwangyu, Lucilla said: 'There is someone who looks like me and speaks with my voice. I am Imprinting for her. May I ask who that is?'

'No.'

Lucilla held her silence. She had not expected revelation but it had been remarked more than once that she bore a striking resemblance to Senior Security Mother Darwi Odrade. '*A young Odrade.*' Lucilla had heard this on several occasions. Both Lucilla and Odrade were, of course, in the Atreides line with a strong back-breeding from Siona descendants. The Fish Speakers had no monopoly on *those* genes! But the *Other Memories* of a Reverend Mother, even with their linear selectivity and confinement to the female side, provided important clues to the broad shape of the ghola project. Lucilla, who had come to depend on her experiences of the Jessica persona buried some five thousand years back in the Sisterhood's genetic manipulations, felt a deep sense of dread from that source now. There was a familiar pattern here. It gave off such an intense feeling of doom that Lucilla fell automatically into the Litany Against Fear as she had been taught it in her first introduction to the Sisterhood's rites:

'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.'

Calm returned to Lucilla.

Schwangyu, sensing some of this, allowed her guard to drop slightly. Lucilla was no dullard, no *special* Reverend Mother with an empty title and barely sufficient background to function without embarrassing the Sisterhood. Lucilla was the real thing

and some reactions could not be hidden from her, not even reactions of another Reverend Mother. Very well, let her know the full extent of the opposition to this foolish, this *dangerous* project!

'I do not think their ghola will survive to see Rakis,' Schwangyu said.

Lucilla let this pass. 'Tell me about his friends,' she said.

'He has no friends; only teachers.'

'When will I meet them?' She kept her gaze on the opposite parapet, where Patrin leaned idly against a low pillar, his heavy lasgun at the ready. Lucilla realized with an abrupt shock that Patrin was watching her. Patrin was a message from the Bashar! Schwangyu obviously saw and understood. *We guard him!*

'I presume it's Miles Teg you're so anxious to meet,' Schwangyu said.

'Among others.'

'Don't you want to make contact with the ghola first?'

'I've already made contact with him.' Lucilla nodded toward the enclosed yard where the child once more stood almost motionless and looking up at her. 'He's a thoughtful one.'

'I've only the reports on the others,' Schwangyu said, 'but I suspect this is the most thoughtful one of the series.'

Lucilla suppressed an involuntary shudder at the readiness for violent opposition in Schwangyu's words and attitude. There was not one hint that the child below shared a common humanity with them.

While Lucilla was thinking this, clouds covered the sun as they often did here at this hour. A cold wind blew in over the Keep's walls, swirling around the courtyard. The child turned away and picked up the speed of his exercises, getting his warmth from increased activity.

'Where does he go to be alone?' Lucilla asked.

'Mostly to his room. He has tried a few dangerous escapades, but we have discouraged this.'

'He must hate us very much.'

'I'm sure of it.'

'I will have to deal with that directly.'

'Surely, an Imprinter has no doubts about her ability to overcome hate.'

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'I was thinking of Geasa's mistake.' Lucilla sent a knowing look at Schwangyu. 'I find it astonishing that you let Geasa make such a mistake.'

'I don't interfere with the normal progress of the ghola's instructions. If one of his teachers develops a real affection for him, that is not my problem.'

'An attractive child,' Lucilla said.

They stood a bit longer watching the Duncan Idaho ghola at his training-play. Both Reverend Mothers thought briefly of Geasa, one of the first teachers brought here for the ghola project. Schwangyu's attitude was plain: *Geasa was a providential failure.* Lucilla thought only: *Schwangyu and Geasa complicated my task.* Neither woman gave even a passing moment to the way these thoughts reaffirmed their loyalties.

As she watched the child in the courtyard, Lucilla began to have a new appreciation of what the Tyrant God Emperor had actually achieved. Leto II had employed this ghola-type through uncounted lifetimes – some thirty-five hundred years of them, one after another. And the God Emperor Leto II had been no ordinary force of nature. He had been the biggest juggernaut in human history, rolling over everything: over social systems, over natural and unnatural hatreds, over governmental forms, over rituals (both taboo and mandatory), over religions casual and religions intense. The crushing weight of the Tyrant's passage had left nothing unmarked, not even the Bene Gesserit.

Leto II had called it 'The Golden Path' and this Duncan Idaho-type ghola below her now had figured prominently in that awesome passage. Lucilla had studied the Bene Gesserit accounts, probably the best in the universe. Even today on most of the old Imperial Planets, newly married couples still scattered dollops of water east and west, mouthing the local version of 'Let Thy blessings flow back to us from this offering, O God of Infinite Power and Infinite Mercy.'

Once, it had been the task of Fish Speakers and their tame priesthood to enforce such obeisance. But the thing had developed its own momentum, becoming a pervasive compulsion. Even the most doubting of believers said: 'Well, it can do no harm.' It was an accomplishment which the finest religious

engineers of the Bene Gesserit Missionaria Protectiva admired with frustrated awe. The Tyrant had surpassed the Bene Gesserit best. And fifteen hundred years since the Tyrant's death, the Sisterhood remained powerless to unlock the central knot of that fearsome accomplishment.

'Who has charge of the child's religious training?' Lucilla asked.

'No one,' Schwangyu said. 'Why bother? If he is reawakened to his original memories, he will have his own ideas. We will deal with those if we ever have to.'

The child below them completed his allotted training time. Without another look up at the watchers on the parapet, he left the enclosed yard and entered a wide doorway on the left. Patrin, too, abandoned his guard position without glancing at the two Reverend Mothers.

'Don't be fooled by Teg's people,' Schwangyu said. 'They have eyes in the backs of their heads. Teg's birth-mother, you know, was one of us. He is teaching that ghola things better never shared!'

> Explosions are also compressions of time. Observable changes in the natural universe all are explosive to some degree and from some point of view; otherwise you would not notice them. Smooth continuity of change, if slowed sufficiently, goes without notice by observers whose time/attention span is too short. Thus, I tell you, I have seen changes you would never have marked.
>
> —Leto II

The woman standing in Chapter House Planet's morning light across the table from the Reverend Mother Superior Alma Mavis Taraza was tall and supple. The long aba robe which encased her in shimmering black from shoulders to floor did not completely conceal the grace with which her body expressed every movement.

Taraza leaned forward in her chairdog and scanned the Records Relay projecting its condensed Bene Gesserit glyphs above the tabletop for her eyes only.