

FOUNDATION

"The Emperor's Peace"

Written by

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Based on the novels by Isaac Asimov

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EXT. TERMINUS - NIGHT

A family of four moons hangs over TERMINUS, a stubbornly beautiful frontier planet. Glaciers, geothermal pools.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

*When I was a child I told my mother
I wanted to learn every planet in
the Galactic Empire, beginning in
the center and moving out to star's
end.*

A clutch of LIZARDS jog in unison through tundra, moving with military precision. They stop, frozen in identical poses. NOW THEY BOLT FOR COVER. They are A HIVE MIND animal.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

*Each night, she told me stories. I
traveled light years, my mind
reaching deep into the Empire,
expanding to hold more and more
worlds...*

The source of their anxiety: An AIRCAR zips by, manned by A WATCHMAN. He scans the terrain for hostile creatures, a RANGE RIFLE loosely slung on his back like a traveling troubadour.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

*But I never reached Terminus.
(beat)
Straddling the farthest reaches of
civilization and the blackness
beyond...Unsettled by Man...It was
The End. And Its story remained
dark to me until many years later.*

As the Warden's craft passes by we reveal TERMINUS CITY--a small settlement supporting five thousand. The city consists of efficient 3-D printed buildings, both large and small.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

*Until it became My Story. Until it
became The Only Story.*

INT. TERMINUS CITY - VERISOF FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

POLY VERISOF (13) stands before his sleeping GRANDFATHER. He's fully dressed, barely visible in the darkness. After a moment he slips silently outside.

EXT. TERMINUS CITY - RESIDENTIAL SECTOR - NIGHT

Poly moves quietly through the dozens of domes.

Rendezvousing with HIS TWEEN PEEPS: LAYLO AND GIA, two girls his age but years wiser, and KEIR, his running mate.

The kids sneak through town, skirting security lights. THE HOWL OF A LARGE PREDATOR in the distance. They stop.

LAYLO
A Bishop's Claw.

The creature cries out again. They listen closely.

POLY
Upvalley.

They continue on; cautious but unafraid. *This is their world.*

EXT. TERMINUS CITY - THE VAULT COMPLEX - NIGHT

The kids make their way out of town and up a rise. We reveal:

THE VAULT

A GRAND STRUCTURE floating two meters above the ground. Shimmering silent like a Sphinx in the Terminus moonlight.

The vault's angles and planes push against each other with a complicated geometry. It feels like the physical expression of a math equation solved by the gods. *And maybe it is.*

LAYLO
I can feel it already.

KEIR
You can't.

LAYLO
In my fingers.

KEIR
(pointing down slope)
Null Field starts down there. Near that rock. My brother told me.

GIA
Some people feel it stronger.

KEIR
Some people feel scared stronger.

GIA
So go first then.

KEIR

I thought Poly was first.

GIA

You go first and put a marker past the rock, I'll let you touch my tit.

LAYLO

KEIR

Gia--

For one minute.

GIA

For ten seconds. Or you can look at both for thirty.

LAYLO

Gia.

KEIR

Swear on your moon.

She reaches three fingers towards the third of the four-moon family. And then touches them to her throat's pulse.

GIA

Four-sworn.

(beat)

You got your marker?

He pulls out a stick with a strip of cloth wrapped around it in a particular pattern. She gestures: get a move on...

Keir looks at Poly, who shrugs. This is all you, bud. Keir walks slowly down the slope. Carefully.

LAYLO

You get nothing if you win.

GIA

I get to watch him piss his pants.

ON KEIR: as he approaches the Vault. The field ahead littered with beribboned sticks poking out of the ground. From their weathered states we understand that this game has been played by Terminus kids for years.

Keir breathes deep in, making his way to the rock which landmarks their bet. He's feeling okay--oh, no he's not--his knee buckles, an unseen force affecting him.

GIA (CONT'D)

Here we go.

Keir rights himself, moves forward. He's sweating now, eyes swimming. The multi-glow nauseates him. Or is it the proximity to the Vault? Of course it is.

Keir moans, his hands on his knees. His head buzzes.

He looks back at his friends. They're smeared, distorted. Fuck. The rock is so close...Another step...

Nope. Keir barely jabs his stick in the ground and staggers back to the gang as they mock him. He collapses at Gia's feet. She crouches by him, intimate. Whispers:

GIA (CONT'D)

Your brother is an assclaw.

Gia laughs her head off. But Laylo cuts her off--look:

ANGLE ON: POLY VERISOF, as he walks with (some) confidence down the slope. He's already near Keir's marker.

GIA (CONT'D)

We don't have a deal, Poly!

He shrugs. Never occurred to him.

POLY

I know. I wanna see the Ghost.

He pushes deeper into the Null Field, keeping his eyes on the Vault. Trying to fight the effects of the field.

He makes it to the rock! Looks back, gives a weak wave. Another five meters...Most of the older markers are clustered here. Obviously this is where most people give up.

He falls to his knees. His vision tunnels. Crawls forward, hand still holding his marker...Behind him he can hear a weird echoed yelling--is it cheering? Or something frantic?

From the darkened part of his vision A FIGURE GLIDES INTO VIEW, MOTION IN THE BLACKNESS...

He's overwhelmed by the night in his head and **PASSES OUT**.

POLY WAKES UP TO BEING DRAGGED ALONG THE GROUND.

What the fuck? Am I being taken by a predator? The Ghost? The figure pulls Poly back past the rock, past the earliest markers. Lays him down in the quiet safety of the slope.

UNSEEN FIGURE

They're all gone. Eat.

The figure drops A PROTEIN TUBE onto his chest. This is SALVOR HARDIN (30s), stolid in a way that doesn't betray her fox-like intelligence. She unwraps the protein tube for him.

SALVOR HARDIN

If you can keep it down you probably won't have any permanent neuro scarring.

(off his look)

I'm kidding. You probably will.

She gives him a thin smile. Just kidding again.

POLY

I saw the Ghost.

SALVOR HARDIN

You saw me. *Eat.*

He sucks in some of the protein tube. Whoa. Woozy.

SALVOR HARDIN (CONT'D)

(re: his distant marker)

That's a nice run. Haven't seen anyone get past the main marker cluster in years. Not without darkening their pants. *You didn't--*

POLY

No, Ma'am.

He tries to sit up but his head swims. She supports him as he reorients. Serious:

SALVOR HARDIN

Should've turned back like your boy, Keir. People who've tried to get closer have been hurt. Really.

POLY

You weren't. You got the record and you're ok.

SALVOR

Am I.

POLY

Your marker's so far no one's even seen it.

SALVOR HARDIN

Because it doesn't exist. And neither does the Ghost.

(MORE)

SALVOR HARDIN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'm the Warden, Poly. People lie about me all the time. It's part of the job.

POLY

(re: the vault)

When do you think it's gonna tell us what it is, Warden?

SALVOR HARDIN

Call me Salvor. And you assume it cares anything about us.

(beat, re: the slope)

Go. Be careful. There's a Bishop's Claw--

POLY

--Upvalley. I know.

He struggles his way back up the hill. Smart kids are *dumb*.

Salvor watches him disappear. Turns back to regard the Vault.

WE GO BLACK.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

Salvor Hardin. Poly. Phara. The Mule. We would learn these stories some day. Songs of heroism and villainy.

TITLE: "THIRTY-FIVE YEARS EARLIER."

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

But there were others first. The ones who caused it all. An Emperor. A mathematician. A martyr. A traitor...

EXT. A LARGE BODY OF WATER - SYNNA - EARLY MORNING

CLOSE on GAAL DORNICK, early 20s, and our Narrator. Intense eyes, a face calm as the water on which she travels...

GAAL (V.O.)

At least one of those was me.

Gaal is rowing a BEAUTIFUL LONG BOAT, along with her FATHER, JARKO. Gaal's MOTHER, BAYLA, sits astern, steering a rudder. Both parents have SMALL, JEWEL-LIKE BLACK STONES embedded in their cheek-bones. Gaal does not.

The Dornicks' boat is in the middle of an enormous body of water, no land in sight. Ahead of them, we see:

TWO ROBED FIGURES APPARENTLY STANDING ON THE WATER

But actually standing on A LARGE METAL PLATFORM barely poking above the water's surface, waves lapping at their feet.

The two figures, male and female SYNNITE SEER-PRIESTS, watch the longboat bump against the platform and the Dornicks climb out. Bayla carries a small pack.

The priests nod to Jarko and Bayla. With disdain, they note Gaal's jewel-free face and turn from her. Bayla helps her daughter out. Gaal takes the bag from her and slings it over her shoulder. *It's hers. And she should carry it.*

A LOUD ROARING RUMBLE.

The group looks up to see A SMALL SHUTTLE slowly dropping to the platform. It lands, pushing the water off the platform.

Gaal turns to her parents. *This is it.* Her father wipes away a tear, love in his eyes. The three of them embrace, no one wanting to let go. Now her mom cries.

The robed priests climb the stairs to the interior of the shuttle. They don't look back for Gaal.

Finally, Gaal lets go of her family. *If she doesn't go now she may never go.* One more glance and she heads up the steps.

INT. THE SHUTTLE - SOON AFTER

Tight on Gaal looking out a small portal, watching her parents' boat drifting away from the launch platform. Gaal watches as her home planet gets smaller and smaller, her family disappearing. MATCH CUT:

INT. IMPERIAL JUMPSHIP - TRAVELING IN SPACE

Gaal stares out a WINDOW at a stunning Eagle-type Nebula, transfixed. Absently fingering a small leather bag that hangs from a cord around her neck.

Suddenly, she WHIPS her head left, startled. A MAN's there.

GAAL

Did you say something?

MAN

No. But I *was* going to ask if this was your first time on an Imperial Jumpship.

GAAL

It is.

He's an unassuming man, older than she, kind eyes.

JERRIL

Jerril.

GAAL

(doesn't want to be rude)
Gaal.

JERRIL

Synnax? Your accent is strong.

GAAL

Is it?

JERRIL

You don't hear it much at the Core, but I travel near the rim worlds sometimes.

Gaal self-consciously touches her cheekbone.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

(re: her cheeks)
Whoever took the prayer stones out did a great job. You wouldn't see the scars if you didn't know to look.

And yes, if we look closely at her cheekbones we can see faint scars dotting the bone-line under her eyes.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

Sorry if I overstepped. When you travel as much as I do, talking to strangers is easy as breathing.

She looks up as A TONE SOUNDS:

ANNOUNCEMENT

Beginning transfer sequence. Move to JumpPods and secure for Travel.

Passengers begin heading toward the JumpPod Modules.

INT. JUMPPOD MODULE - MOMENTS LATER

Jerril and Gaal enter a room filled with secure individual creches. Moving lightly through the room are

--SPACERS, long, tall humanoid space sailors who've adapted to low gravity. They help everyone get to their creches.

JERRIL

It doesn't screw me up but some people come out of the Jump feeling a little hungover.

Gaal and Jerril sit in neighboring creches. The foam inside of the creche expands to snuggle them in.

GAAL

I don't drink. My parents dove an algae farm and we woke up pretty early.

JERRIL

You're gonna sleep through this. They make sure of it.
(re: the foam)
It secretes a cortical somnolent.

A Spacer moves from creche to creche, activating SAFETY HARNESSSES which extend across Gaal's chest and waist.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

They can't have the grav on during the jump. I don't know why.

GAAL

(matter of fact)
The grav generators output a waveform that corrupts the JumpDrive's ability to plot fourth dimensional points at transdimensional speeds. Strictly speaking they're not "points" as most people understand them but time as a shape can be confusing.

He looks at her: oh shit. I've been mansplaining a genius.

JERRIL

Why are you going to Trantor?

GAAL

I'm going to work with Hari Seldon. I won a math contest.

JERRIL

Wow. Hari Seldon? And you, from Synnax?

GAAL

(covering her pride)

It was a pretty big contest.

ANOTHER TONE SOUNDS. Around the edges of the foam a pink chemical sweats into passengers' bare skin.

JERRIL

Hold on. This part--

ANNOUNCEMENT

Transferring to Jump-space.

AND ALL OF THE PASSENGERS' HEADS LOLL BACK INTO THE FOAM

Gaal's POV as the sedative kicks in and her vision GOES DARK.

Then, *LOUD BEEPING*. Suddenly Gaal's AWAKE, sitting up in her creche: We're in fourth dimensional warped space...

But right now it's even worse than the regular transdimensional taffy pull of Jump-space Travel because:

SOMEONE ELSE IS AWAKE AS WELL

A MAN, RANTING. Pulling at his medical leads as THREE SPACERS descend on him in Zero-G. Wrestling him back into his creche. One spacer injects him with a sedative as--

--a Spacer catches Gaal's eye: *the fuck are you doing awake?*

Instinctively, Gaal settles back into her creche, closing her eyes, trying to quiet her racing heart.

EXT. BLACK SPACE NEAR TRANTOR - (AN INSTANT) LATER

As the JumpShip smears into existence. The Jump concluded.

INT. IMPERIAL JUMPSHIP - LATER

The passengers are returning to the viewing windows. Jerril falls in beside Gaal, watching as

THE MAN WHO HAD THE MID-JUMP FREAKOUT is escorted away on a gurney by SPACER MEDICS.

JERRIL

Every once in a while an asshole gets it in his head to take a cortoblocker and stay awake for the jump. If you're not a spacer you can find your body and mind taking different trips.

GAAL

(lying her ass off)
I slept through the whole thing.

Her attention is drawn past him as she looks in wonderment:

GAAL (CONT'D)

Oh.

Jerril smiles. The ship has spun and out a window she sees:
A MASSIVE SPACE STATION TETHERED TO A 40,000 KILOMETER LONG CABLE!

Hundreds of space vessels zip in and out of the station.

JERRIL

If the Empire's good for anything they can goddamn *build*.

DOCKING/DISEMBARKATION MONTAGE - VARIOUS SHOTS

Jumpships are the crown jewels of the Imperial fleet. Watching one dock at the space station will be *magnificent*.

GAAL (V.O.)

The Abraxas Conjecture was posited 437 years ago. It was considered the last great unsolvable proof.

(beat)

Until I solved it.

(beat)

It took the greatest minds in the galaxy six months to check my work. And even then there were dissenters who refused to accept a girl from an agricultural collective had done what had never been done.

(beat)

But then Hari Seldon invited me to Trantor. And the doubting stopped.

As the ship docks, we get our first good look at the ENORMOUS TAUT CABLE extending down from the station toward Trantor.

BACK ON GAAL

There are tears in her eyes. She never imagined she'd experience something like this first-hand.

GAAL (V.O.)

The impossible happens every day.

INT. THE ARRIVAL TERMINAL - TRANTOR SPACE STATION - LATER

Gaal and Jerril make their way through the vast terminal packed with arrivals from various worlds. Everybody's human, but that doesn't mean people look the same...

A HOLO OF EMPEROR CLEON THE FIRST (40s, charismatic) TEN METERS TALL:

HOLOGRAM OF CLEON¹

Welcome to Trantor, The Eye of the Empire. Please Respect and Enjoy the Peace.

Gaal walks through his massive holographic foot, brushing past a FEATURED PORTER (we'll come back to this guy).

IN BACKGROUND: VARIOUS NEWS HOLOS: chaotic footage of a violent skirmish on an asteroid mining colony.

JERRIL

Probably didn't make the news on your world. Some kind of shootout at the ass-end of the galaxy. Anacreon and Thespis. Back-water planets squabbling over asteroid mining rights, I guess.

Gaal hears a murmur and the entire terminal goes quiet. She turns to see: AN IMPERIAL GUARD PROCESSION CARRYING SIX WHITE CASKETS EMBOSSED WITH THE SUN/SPACESHIP SIGIL OF THE EMPIRE.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

(re: coffins, sotto)
Imperial Appraisers got caught in the crossfire, so now it's a big deal.

She watches as the caskets move past, people paying respects. Moving through and beyond Cleon's holo.

INT. THE ARRIVAL TERMINAL - CUSTOMS - MINUTES LATER

The Customs Agent scans Gaal's papers.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Sponsor and contact?

GAAL
Dr. Hari Seldon. Streeling
University.

He reads her papers intently. She gets nervous.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Expected return to home planet?

GAAL
None...
(committing)
This is my home now.

CUSTOMS AGENT
(stamping her papers)
Any car on the stalk. Please
Respect and Enjoy the Peace.

INT. SPACE ELEVATOR CAR - MINUTES LATER

Gaal enters a large transport module which holds a hundred people. The opposite wall is glass--observation windows. She follows TWO TEACHERS and a DOZEN SCHOOL CHILDREN.

TEACHER
The star bridge is thirty thousand kilometers above Trantor's surface, held in place just outside the atmosphere by a heavy-cobolite cable twelve meters in diameter...

Gaal sits down at the next bench, finding her travel buddy Jerril already there munching on a snack.

JERRIL
(re: elevator)
Now that I know you a little I'll save my breath explaining everything.

A TONE sounds. The doors behind close. Gaal sees a little girl looking at her. She smiles at the girl.

JERRIL (CONT'D)
This part is great, though...

Suddenly the car drops down the elevator stalk and out of the station, revealing A DIZZYING VIEW OF SPACE.

The children SCREAM like they're going to die. And Gaal nearly does as well. She reaches out to the girl, almost holding her hand. But she can't look away from the scene...

EXT. THE SPACE ELEVATOR STALK - CAR - SAME

We're outside looking at the whole thing now--and it's mind boggling. Hundreds of elevator cars crawling up and down the stalk, like insects on history's longest stem...

GAAL (V.O.)

It takes twenty-seven hours to drop from Trantor Station to the planet's surface. Although technically it's not the surface. Billions of citizens live and die underground without ever seeing Trantor's outer shell...

INT. GAAL'S ELEVATOR CAR - TWENTY-FIVE HOURS LATER

Many of the passengers are sleeping. But Gaal and the Little Girl stand at the window as TRANTOR IS REVEALED BENEATH THEM.

LITTLE GIRL

I'm gonna stay awake the whole ride.

GAAL

(smiles at her)

Me, too.

SMART WINDOWS ON THE ELEVATOR CAR SHOW:

An animated time lapse outside: Trantor hundreds of years ago, MEGA CITIES dotting its surface. The cities expand as populations grow, spreading amoeba-like. Becoming--

A CONTINUOUS, PLANET-WIDE CITY

Then, the planet city begins BUILDING UPWARD--

ANIMATION NARRATOR

A marvel of technical engineering, the world-city took shape over the course of centuries...

Layer after layer after layer is erected, encasing the entirety of the world like a series of nesting shells--

ANIMATION NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Consisting of a hundred global wide levels and counting, Trantor now boasts a population of nearly ninety-eight billion people.

The world-city is a complex and beautiful confection of industrial design, WITH NO NATURE in sight except for--

GAAL (V.O.)

*Whatever remained of the natural
world belonged to the Emperor.*

EXT. THE IMPERIAL PALACE - ESTABLISHING

A futuristic Versailles. The only 200 square km of grass on this whole metal planet.

We should go from the sublime to the ridiculously familiar:

INT. IMPERIAL DINING ROOM - DAY

A table set for three. Two seats filled. CLEON¹¹, a hundred years old but looks eighty, and CLEON¹³, seven years old. There's no food at the table. They wait.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - HALLWAY - SAME

Cleon¹² walks briskly carrying a COVERED STEAMING PAN. Behind him, members of the SERVING STAFF follow, nervous.

INT. THE IMPERIAL DINING ROOM - SAME

Old Man Cleon and Young Cleon wait. Scared attendants shift behind them. The Cleons are oblivious to others' discomfort.

OLD MAN CLEON

What are your lessons this morning,
Brother Dawn?

YOUNG CLEON

The Outer Reach Kingdoms. I learned
an old Anacreon song about hunting.

OLD MAN CLEON

There's a lot of truth in music.

YOUNG CLEON

A boy bleeds a fawn with a knife
and then takes shelter in her coat.

Cleon¹² enters the room, the servants snap to attention--

CLEON¹²

That one's not really a hunting
song. That's a dirty song about a
boy's first time with a woman.

(off the boy's look)

(MORE)

CLEON12 (CONT'D)

Play it back in your mind. And
don't confuse the two.

He places the steaming tray on the table. Reveals A BEAUTIFUL
ROAST BIRD. The servants approach to serve...

OLD MAN CLEON

Brother Day, I wish you'd leave the
peacock to the cooks. You'll be no
less fascinating to your
biographers.

Cleon¹² puts the lid back. The servants back off, unsure.

CLEON¹²

Brother Dusk imagines I do this to
be colorful and thinks I confuse
that with clever.

OLD MAN CLEON

Brother Day puts more words in my
mouth than he does poultry--

CLEON¹²

(to young Cleon)

It's the lard. The cooks inject it
under the skin with a needle right
before roasting. Do you know why
they use a needle?

YOUNG CLEON

Because it's efficient?

CLEON¹²

Because they're afraid if they use
a knife (raising voice to chefs) *as*
is the time-honored way they might
rip the skin and I'll send them to
a stew-pot stall fifty levels down.

Old Man Cleon stifles a laugh.

CLEON¹² (CONT'D)

All of which is a problem. Why?

YOUNG CLEON

(thinking)

Because when people are afraid to
do their job right they're certain
to do it wrong. That's poor
stewardship.

CLEON¹²

No. It's poor roast peacock. Not everything is a teachable moment.

He pulls the lid off the roasting pan. The servants hesitate. He gestures for them: *what the hell are you waiting for?*

INT. IMPERIAL DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Cleons are eating. *We might notice that all three Cleons are right-handed and have eerily similar mannerisms.*

DEMERZEL, Cleon's aide-de-camp, enters. She is patient, quiet, *Swintonesque*. But her opinion holds great value.

DEMERZEL

Empire.

ALL CLEONS

Demerzel.

DEMERZEL

The Delegations from Thespis and Anacreon are arriving.

CLEON¹²

How do they seem?

DEMERZEL

Peevish.

CLEON¹²

Have Outer Reach Trade bring tariff projections to the residence.

(rising, to young Cleon)

Dress nice, have someone brush your hair.

(then)

It's not the most important thing we'll do this week but it's the most important thing *they'll do in their lifetimes.*

EXT. THE IMPERIAL PALACE - LANDERPAD - DAY

Demerzel stands motionless at the landing field. Young Cleon at her side, now dressed in formal Imperial finery.

TWO IMPERIAL SHUTTLES set down. FORMAL DELEGATIONS APPEAR from each craft: from **ANACREON** and **THESPIS**.

THE ANACREONS are stockier, dressed in ornate, wooden armor.

THE THESPINS are reserved, dressed in gray, flowing robes and beautiful hand tattoos. They all have LAVENDER IRISES.

DEMERZEL

Anacreon and Thespis. Observe the mannerisms of each party.

Young Cleon studies the two delegations, who stand apart, stiff, studiously avoiding eye contact with each other.

YOUNG CLEON

They hate each other.

DEMERZEL

(nodding)

Their enmity is legendary. But war is expensive and so we have called them onto the carpet to broker a peace.

EXT./INT. ANCHOR HUB - SPACE ELEVATOR - TRANTOR - EVENING

Gaal's car drops through the outermost metal shell into the planet's subterranean environs. The car stops at the hub, opening into a TERMINAL larger than any train station you know. She waves the little girl good-bye and finds Jerril.

GAAL

Thanks for the company.

JERRIL

Good luck with the new job. Hope Hari Seldon's worth the trip.

He disappears into the crowd, leaving her alone. Gaal takes it all in for a beat--overwhelmed, excited--

A country mouse plucked from her provincial home and ferried to the literal CAPITOL OF THE GALAXY.

She checks her watch. A FACE AND NAME: RAYCH. Gaal scans the terminal. A MAN APPROACHES. She turns just as he arrives--

MAN

That's me.

GAAL

What?

MAN

(re: her watch)

That's me. Raych. I work for Hari. Dr. Seldon.

We like RAYCH. He's late 20s with a definite *follow me* vibe.

RAYCH

Baggage claim is this way--

GAAL

(re: her small carry-on)

No. This is all of it.

RAYCH

Oh. Okay. Then the rest of the planet is *this way*.

He gestures for her to follow. They move out of the terminal into **A TRANTOR STREET**.

Holy shit. Gaal's never seen anything like it. Packed with people, buildings reach to an artificial night-sky ceiling.

RAYCH (CONT'D)

(points at sky)

It's supposed to be a perfect replica.

(adding)

Not that we'd know. 'Least not down here. Half of level 64 is just servers running skies.

She looks from the sky in time to miss a passing servo-cart. Dodges it without breaking stride. Oddly prescient.

RAYCH (CONT'D)

This way.

He gestures to board a TROLLEY. She does and finds him watching her. Self-consciously brushing her cheek.

GAAL

What?

RAYCH

Sorry. I've never met anyone from Synnax before. After the Seers withdrew the ambassador during the Cleanse, they shut the Consulate.

GAAL

(clarifying her stance)

The Seers called it The Cleanse. A lot of us call it The Purge now.

RAYCH
(apologetic)
Right. Of course.

GAAL
Is there still a Seer-Church here?

RAYCH
I think so. Level 22?

GAAL
Yeah they wouldn't ever close that.
(looking around)
Is the hotel on this level?

RAYCH
We're not going to the hotel. We're
going to see Hari.

GAAL
Right now? Is something wrong?

RAYCH
Hari can explain.

As he guides them further down the trolley, we (and she) may discreetly see him check his six...*Are they being followed?*

CUT TO:

A BEAUTIFUL PAINTED RENDERING OF AN IMPERIAL JUMPSHIP

The camera widens out and we see THE LARGEST MURAL THAT HAS EVER BEEN PAINTED IN THE FUTURE HISTORY OF THE GALAXY.

THE MURAL OF SOULS

Sprawling and intricate, the Mural of Souls depicts the *entire history of the Modern Empire.*

THE ANACREON AND THESPIN ENVOYS are being given a tour in separate sections of the mural. Kept apart from one another. Demerzel guides the Anacreon tour.

DEMERZEL
A singular achievement, an expression of compassion and stewardship, *the Mural of Souls.*
(beat)
Worked on every day by the senior member of the Genetic Dynasty, the Mural depicts The Four Century Age of Peace and the Galactic Family.
(MORE)

DEMERZEL (CONT'D)

Each image curated and created by a Steering Hand set steadily on this Age's tiller. Notice the active chroma, how the pigment subtly moves...

And so it does. In eerie slow motion. Like a Bill Viola installation.

An ANACREON DIPLOMAT (AMBASSADOR XANDEM) leans to another DIPLOMAT and whispers something snarky. Demerzel notices.

DEMERZEL (CONT'D)

Provincial Ambassador Xandem. Do you have a question or comment about the Mural?

It's worth noting Demerzel feels she can add a hint of *dickhead* for a Provincial Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR XANDEM

We were just marveling at the Empire's benevolent reach.

(beat)

For it is a marvel.

Ambassador Xandem wants none of her shade. He also can't lose face with his own people. Demerzel smiles. They both know the game being played.

INT. TRANTOR - LEVEL TRANSPORT - SAME

The trolley pulls to a stop; Raych and Gaal jump off and make for an elevator. Raych presses the Level Code. They rise..

Gaal whispers to herself, barely audible. Like a prayer. (*But actually a series of very large, consecutive prime numbers.*)

RAYCH

Are you...praying?

GAAL

No. Why?

RAYCH

Your lips were moving.

GAAL

(after a beat)

When I'm nervous I count primes.

RAYCH

1,3,5,7, on and on?

GAAL

Since I was a kid. I'm pretty far
along in the sequence.

Whoa. She's a different breed.

RAYCH

When I was a kid I ate rocks.

She smiles, appreciates him trying to make her at ease. The
elevator doors slide open revealing:

INT. TRANTOR - LEVEL TWO - SAME

This space feels grander than the previous level, less
crowded. Forgetting her anxiety, Gaal marvels as she sees:

THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY - SAME

More a cathedral than a library.

RAYCH

Hari said you'd want to see this.

GAAL (V.O.)

*If knowledge was power...the
Imperial Library on Trantor
contained the most power in the
whole of the Galaxy.*

(beat)

*At least it did that day. The only
day I would ever see it.*

On Gaal's face as they enter the library...

INT. THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

We'll find an amazing library and make it more amazing-er.
Gaal is gobsmacked--*this* is why she came to Trantor.

Raych makes eye contact with a WOMAN (RETH LINN, 40s)
shelving books--she flashes him a subtle sign. He
acknowledges ever slightly. (We'll see her again in 102.)

Raych leads Gaal through the mammoth stacks. She can barely
control her emotions. They come to an indistinct door. He
pauses before knocking, looks to her: *are you ready?*

Gaal pauses, her thumb unconsciously pressed to her line of
prayer-stone scars. Finally, she nods. *Knock.*

INT. THE RARE MANUSCRIPT ANNEX - CONTINUOUS

Books, manuscripts, hand-written notes in glass cases. Even the dust in this room fell off the robes of ancient scholars.

AND HARI SELDON. An old man sitting in an old cracked chair in the corner of an old room with an old book in his lap.

Note: he's positioned himself so as to be surrounded by rare mathematical texts. Not subtle, Hari.

He only looks up briefly and returns to the mathematics text.

HARI SELDON
Gaal Dornick. Sit.

GAAL
(this is her idol)
Dr. Seldon. I'm...so honored to--

HARI SELDON
I said *sit*.

Gaal sits, butterflies in her stomach.

Hari dives in. He's abrupt. Smarter than anyone you will ever meet. And he *loves* keeping people off balance.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)
You know Kalle's *Ninth Proof of Folding*.

She looks at Raych. Is that a question? Raych nods: *answer*.

GAAL
Yes. I couldn't have solved Abraxas without it.

HARI SELDON
But no one else thought to use it. In five hundred years. Why do you think that is?

She hesitates. Still intimidated.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)
That's not rhetorical.

GAAL
It's boring. It's too narrow. Kalle was a terrible writer.

HARI SELDON

And no one reads her if they don't have to. So why did you?

GAAL

She had a radical theory about rings of integers in non-Archimedean local fields--

HARI SELDON

True. But bullshit. Why. Did. You?
(then)

I'm not your parents. You don't have to lie to me.

GAAL

(ashamed to admit it)
I was lonely.

Hari studies her. Eyes bright. The first real window into her heart. If this was Gaal's first test, she passed it.

HARI SELDON

Yes, with a mind like yours, *living in that place*. I'm sure you were.

He hands over the old manuscript. She looks at it. Eyes wide:

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)

Kalle's original proof manuscript. Written in her native language. Thraxian.

(beat, re: the proof)
No one reads Thraxian anymore but parts are actually quite beautiful.

Gaal's drawn into the manuscript. Hari shifts in his chair. Just enough to change the energy in the room. She looks up.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)

They're going to arrest me tomorrow. And you. It's almost a certainty.

GAAL

What--!? Arrest? Why--?

HARI SELDON

There's a non-zero chance they won't do it. But I don't think it's a number worth discussing.

She looks at Raych, confused. He gestures back to Hari.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)

You've read my work. Psychohistory.

GAAL

Every mathematician has read--

HARI SELDON

Do you agree that with the correct algorithm we can anticipate the reactions of groups to various social and economic forces? Assuming a statistically significant sample size?

GAAL

In theory, but I don't know what it has to do with--

HARI SELDON

It's not a theory. It's the nature of Mankind expressed in numbers. And it's the reason the Empire will take us.

GAAL

They're worried you can predict the future?

HARI SELDON

They're worried people *believe* I can predict the future. And they don't like the future I predict.

GAAL

Which is what?

Hari glances at Raych, then back to Gaal. And then:

HARI SELDON

That Trantor is going to be destroyed. That the Empire will fall.

Gaal blinks, processing the enormity of what he's saying.

HARI

These aren't things I'm anxious to tell people. It's just what the math is.

She stands up, looks to the door, turns back, sits again. She places her hands on her face, her fingers where the prayer-stones used to be. Runs her fingers back and forth...

HARI (CONT'D)

(re: her hands)

You can take the girl from Synnax,
but maybe not Synnax from the girl.

She quickly puts her hands to her lap and intertwines them.
Hari removes a SMALL DARK OPALESCENT CUBE from somewhere.

GAAL

Why let me come all the way here
just to arrest me?

HARI SELDON

(a challenge)

You tell me, Gaal.

He presses the cube just so and the ROOM IS FILLED WITH
COMPLEX MATHEMATICAL FORMULAS FLOATING AROUND THEM.

Gaal's eyes dart from bit to bit--he realizes she's quicker
than he imagined and he shuts it off. She thinks...Of course:

GAAL

Because of Abraxas?

(beat)

They think I'm the only one who can
prove you wrong.

HARI SELDON

And you are. If I was.

(mischievous)

But I'm not.

He rotates the cube in his fingers.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)

Go. Get some sleep. It should take
them most of the night to divine
your hotel. We'll talk soon.

She looks to Raych, then Hari. *What the fuck's going on here?*

Hari hands her *Kalle's original manuscript*, his attitude
finally softening. Sympathizing with her plight.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)

I know it's not the prize you came
here for but it'll have to do.

GAAL

I can't keep this.

HARI SELDON

Of course you can. This building
will burn soon.

He looks around at the amazing collection. Resigned.

HARI SELDON (CONT'D)

Stealing is a mercy.

INT. THE TRANSPORT ELEVATOR - LATER

Raych and Gaal heading down, down, down. Her mind is reeling.

GAAL

I've read his work since I was
seven. I thought I knew all of it.

(then)

I guess I didn't know it at all.

RAYCH

The Empire isn't going to hurt you.
They need you.

GAAL

You don't know that. And he
doesn't, either.

RAYCH

Gaal--

Her eyes fill with angry tears. Fierce.

GAAL

No. You haven't seen it. When a
planet wants you dead. *You die.*

INT. THE IMPERIAL PALACE - THRONE ROOM - SAME

THREE THRONES ACROSS. Older and Younger Cleon flank Cleon¹².
They are all dressed formally now, in Imperial colors with
Imperial insignias. Off to the side stands Demerzel.

Cleon wears a large metal necklace with the Imperial crest.

OPPOSITE THE CLEONS are the delegations, Anacreon and
Thespin. They've split the seating wedding-style.

HERALD

Ambassador Xandem, Planet Anacreon,
Outer Reach.

Xandem, the snarker from the Mural scene, approaches the
throne. He presents A BEAUTIFUL WOODEN BOW AND ARROWS.

AMBASSADOR XANDEM

Carved from the oldest tree in the Tallyn Forest, the same wood used to carve the bow of Anacreon's greatest hunter, Larken Keaen. No other weapon has been or will ever be taken from this tree.

CLEON¹²

Thank you, Ambassador.

(then)

Did you enjoy the Mural of Souls?

Xandem blanches, realizes Cleon's aware of his slight snark.

AMBASSADOR XANDEM

Yes, Empire. I've never seen anything like it.

Cleon smiles, small. He likes fucking with these guys. He gives a slight flick of his hand: back to your seat.

HERALD

Honored Diplomat Shae Un Shae,
Planet Thespis, Outer Reach.

Shae approaches, a lacquered box in her tattooed hands. Opens it, revealing a BEAUTIFUL BOOK BOUND IN METAL FILIGREE. In the center of the filigree, the THESPIN SIGIL.

SHAE UN SHAE

A Thespin Book of Ablution. The story of our God and the Path to our Salvation. This version survived the Dust Wars. The filigree was recently smithed to honor the Imperial Peace.

CLEON¹²

Thank you, Honored Diplomat.

(as Shae sits)

And thank you, both delegations,
for making the journey to Trantor.
Not that you had a choice.

Polite (nervous?) laughter.

CLEON¹² (CONT'D)

For nine centuries the Anzor Belt
Agreement served your planets well.
(MORE)

CLEON12 (CONT'D)

The Empire respected Thespis' spiritual connection to the asteroids within the Outer Reach, and Anacreon's local mining operations benefitted from Thespin technological advisors. *Thus benefitting the Imperium.*

(beat)

Last year Thespis identified a rogue asteroid which *they believed* had drifted from the area governed by the Agreement. We took no official position. *Just our ten percent.*

(a smile)

Anacreon believes Thespis acts in bad faith.

(beat)

The Empire believes...Imperial blood has been shed on a cold rock 50,000 light years from home.

He stares both sides down, cold.

CLEON12 (CONT'D)

For any of these three beliefs...a thousand wars have been fought. The next days we will determine if there will be another.

He stands, as do the other Cleons. The room stands.

CLEON12 (CONT'D)

Respect and Enjoy the Peace.

EVERYBODY ELSE

Respect and Enjoy the Peace!

INT. IMPERIAL RESIDENCE - LATER

The three Cleons are helped out of their Imperial vestments. Demerzel organizes the planetary gifts on a table. Cleon nods to Demerzel to hand Young Cleon the Thespin book.

CLEON12

Tell me what you make of that,
Brother Dawn?

Young Cleon handles the book, examining the filigree.

YOUNG CLEON

The Thespins want to remind you how important the Anthor Belt asteroids are to their religion.

CLEON¹²

But look there. In the metal
filigree. The Thespin sigil.

Young Cleon looks close. A different metal woven throughout.

DEMERZEL

The pattern in the sigil is made of
heavy palladium. The metal from the
rogue asteroid. How much would you
say of the sigil?

YOUNG CLEON

Maybe...a fifth of it?

DEMERZEL

Closer to a quarter.

CLEON¹²

Currently the Thespins tithe ten
percent of the mined ore to us.
This is their way of quietly saying
they'll go all the way to twenty-
five percent if we side with them.

Young Cleon's impressed. Cleon points to the bow and arrows.

YOUNG CLEON

There's no metal here at all. Not
even in the arrow tips.

CLEON¹²

That's right. Why?

YOUNG CLEON

The Ancreons need palladium. They
have none.

CLEON¹²

So they're begging?

YOUNG CLEON

(thinks)
No. They're angry.
(beat, re: bow)
They don't care about the metal.

OLD MAN CLEON

What do they care about?

Young Cleon runs his fingers over the wooden arrow points.

YOUNG CLEON

They want to solve this themselves.
And they're threatening Thespis.

(beat)

It's like the hunting song that's
not at all about hunting.

The elder Cleons glance at each other. The boy's learning.

CLEON¹²

Art is simply politics' sweeter
tongue. The customs of the Outer
Reach may seem idiosyncratic. But
our attention to detail is how we
maintain the Peace.

CLEON¹² (CONT'D)

(pointed)

We govern *people*, not planets.

OLD MAN CLEON

Until the people step out of line.
Then we hit them with a big stick.

CLEON¹²

Or we use the stick as a lever.

(to Young Cleon)

Ninety million citizens die *each hour*
across twelve thousand planets. Every
day. *We decide* which deaths matter.
Which ones get carried in white
caskets through the largest spaceport
in the galaxy. *Attention to detail:*
Whose attention. *To what* detail.
Provides *us* the best opportunity to
govern best.

OLD MAN CLEON

Or to overthink a stick.

Young Cleon tries not to laugh as Brother Dusk busts on the
Emperor. Cleon ignores them both. Turns to Demerzel.

CLEON¹²

As to the other matter...?

DEMERZEL

The Commission will have them in
custody shortly.

INT. 47TH LEVEL - VARIOUS STREETS - TRANTOR - NIGHT

Gaal and Raych traveling the dimmed streets of Level 47 by way of trolley. It stops in front of a modest hotel. He jumps off. She doesn't. He looks at her. *What is it?*

GAAL

Do I have any time?

He nods. She isn't getting off. He gets back on.

INT. TRANTOR - LEVEL 22 - NIGHT

Gaal and Raych walk a strange neighborhood, almost ancient. Quiet even for the nighttime. They stop in front of:

A SYNAXIAN SEER-CHURCH

Small, heavy dark stone. Gaal stares at it, clearly torn. Fingers that leather bag dangling around her neck. She makes a decision. *Enters.*

INT. SEER-CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Circular seating, large pillows, deep colors. No chairs. There seems to be no pulpit or focal point.

A SEER-PRIEST appears. Rough, dark-dyed robes. He has SMALL BLACK STONES embedded in his cheek-bones like the people on Gaal's homeworld. He quickly scans the two strangers.

SEER-PRIEST

She can sit and he will stand.

(then)

But he will need to disarm.

She looks at Raych. *Disarm?* Raych reaches under his coat and removes A SERIOUS FUCKING FIGHTING KNIFE from a harness. He offers it to the priest who looks at it like it's poison. He gestures to a shelf. Raych puts it there.

SEER-PRIEST (CONT'D)

The heretic and I will talk.

He leads her to the circle. They sit on their heels. Quiet.

GAAL

Do you know who I am?

SEER-PRIEST

(re: her cheeks)

I know she has torn her Words from her face and can't be seen by God.

GAAL

(stiffens)

But do you know. Who I am.

SEER-PRIEST

She solved one of life's ancient puzzles and cheapened the worth of life in the solving.

(then)

Of course I know. On Synnax she's almost as famous as her new God, Seldon.

GAAL

He's not a God.

SEER-PRIEST

No. He's not. He will die as all men like him die, Unseen by God.

(beat)

As will *She*.

She's strong but terrified. He turns, a different tone:

SEER-PRIEST (CONT'D)

I'll say this once. Because I'm the highest ranking *and only* Seer-priest on this forsaken world...

(beat)

Gaal Dornick. If you're in trouble...I can protect you. Is that what you want?

Close on her. What is she thinking? She glances at Raych...

INT. LEVEL 22 - TROLLEY - LATER

CLOSE ON RAYCH. Alone, in thought. But then we pull out: Gaal is riding next to him. She didn't take the priest's offer.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Raych and Gaal in her hotel room. They sit in chairs. Quiet.

RAYCH

Do you want me to stay? I could just...in that chair.

She hesitates a beat. *Who wants to go through this alone?*

GAAL

Will that stop them from arresting me?

RAYCH

No.

GAAL

(covering)

I'll be all right.

RAYCH

Okay.

(stands)

I'll see you.

GAAL

Will you?

RAYCH

Of course.

GAAL

(as he leaves)

Raych? Please don't tell Hari I went to the church. It's not that I don't believe him. I just needed--

RAYCH

It's all right. I get it.

He holds out his hand. They shake. Holding hands a heartbeat longer than is necessary. There's chemistry there.

INT. GAAL'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Gaal exits the bathroom, hair wet from a shower. She considers her night clothes. Puts on regular clothes instead, including shoes. That tiny leather bag. Lies down in bed, prepared for anything.

FLASHBACK: A SMALL CLAY HUT. Gaal lies down on a cracked green leather reclining chair (like a dentist's chair).

Her face is different: the prayer stones are **INTACT**, eight of them, lining her cheekbones. A **WOMAN WITH SCARS ON HER CHEEKS** comes into focus above her. A **LEATHER STRAP** in her hands.

The woman lays the strap down across Gaal's forehead, wrapping it around the headrest and **TYING IT TIGHT**.

Gaal closes her eyes...

INT. GAAL'S HOTEL ROOM - REAL TIME

Gaal sits up, agitated. She pulls out *Kalle's Ninth Proof of Folding* and begins reading. She's kind of a genius.

INT. HARI'S HOUSE - HIS PRIVATE STUDY - NIGHT

Hari writes furiously in his own journal. His hand moving as fast as it can, words and numbers and equations pouring out.

The black cube (The Prime Radiant) next to him, activated. The entire room swims with equations...

His study door swings open. It's Raych.

HARI

She exceeds my expectations.

RAYCH

First time for everything.

HARI

You sell yourself short.

The younger man looks worn, stressed.

HARI (CONT'D)

It will all work out.

RAYCH

Everything is dying.

HARI

Yes. But that doesn't mean it won't all work out.

Hari reaches out to the younger man and hugs him. Whatever journey they're embarking on, they both know it begins *now*.

Raych leaves; Hari returns to his desk. Shuts the journal.

INT. GAAL'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

CLOSE ON GAAL'S SLEEPING FACE. She wakes with a start.

Again, one of those odd little moments of premonition.

Still fully dressed, manuscript across her chest. She crosses to her door. Looks through the peephole: BLACKNESS. UH OH.

Gaal pulls open the door: IMPERIAL GUARDIANS FILL THE FRAME. *Oh shit*. The guardians part and a MAN IN A SUIT steps up.

SUIT

Gaal Dornick. I represent the Commission of Public Safety. Will you come with us please?

GAAL

Do I have a choice?

SUIT

Yes. Willingly or unwillingly.

The man holds up both of hands, palms up. Like weighing the two choices. The two scary Guardians loom behind him.

She nods, giving in. She starts to go--

SUIT (CONT'D)

Do you want your belongings?

She's so confused by the tone here. Goes back, grabs her bag and considers the stolen manuscript. Is she gonna get in trouble? Probably not any more than she's in.

She shoves it in her bag. Turns to face her destiny...

SUIT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. One last thing.

SUDDENLY A GUARDIAN PULLS A SENSORY DEPRIVATION SHROUD OVER HER HEAD AND HER WORLD GOES BLACK AND SILENT.

The nano-threads form to her face like slick, wet burlap. We can't hear her screams.

INT. GAAL'S DETENTION ROOM - LATER

She sits on a bench, alone in a room with no windows. She looks traumatized, pale, eyes puffy.

The door opens and a tall, thin man enters. LORS AVAKIM. She pushes back against the wall. Not herself anymore. Lors sits at the small table, gestures for her to join him.

She hesitates, but then does as she's told.

LORS

My name is Lors Avakim. Hari sent me. I'm to defend you.

GAAL

How do I know?

LORS

That I'm for you and not against?

She nods. He holds up a finger. Wait a moment. He removes a slim bracelet he's wearing. Twists it and it opens into a W-type shape. As he's doing the business of setting it up:

LORS (CONT'D)

Hari asks..if...after reading her..

He presses a hidden button and places it on the table. The object begins rotating around slowly.

LORS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

..in the original...you still find Kalle a terrible writer.

She gets it. He's a "friend". Watches the gadget spin.

LORS (CONT'D)

We can speak freely now.

GAAL

Where is he?

LORS

Arrested. As he predicted.

GAAL

Anybody else? (Raych obv)

LORS

No. You've both been charged with high treason, conspiracy to destabilize the Imperium.

She puts her face in her hands.

GAAL

Fuck...

LORS

Hari wants you to know how sorry he is for involving you in this.

GAAL

It's not his fault.

Lors stares at her. A pregnant pause.

GAAL (CONT'D)

Is it?

LORS

Once the Imperium learned of Hari's conclusions, they made no secret of trying to disrupt the project. He factored this in. And calculations showed optimal results if these events arrived sooner rather than later.

Her mind whirs, working through the game theory...

GAAL

Did Hari bring me here *as bait*?
Because I can prove him wrong?

LORS

He's not wrong, Ms. Dornick.
(then)
But *yes* on the bait part.

GAAL

(jumping to her feet)
Oh no. Oh no. No.

LORS

No need to fear. Probability of
your survival is high. Even higher
for the success of the project.

GAAL

You keep talking about "the
project" and I don't know what you
even mean!

LORS

Hari will explain. He's been working
on this since you were a child--

GAAL

Well I'm not a child anymore.

THE DOOR OPENS and the SUIT enters. He picks up the jammer
device. Shakes his head at Lors--*not cool, my friend.*

LORS

Have faith.

They escort him out. She stares at the blank door. Calls out:

GAAL

In what?!

She sits back onto the bench. Very alone. Her lips move,
prime numbers being recited as rosaries.

GAAL (V.O.)

*We learn numbers first. Prime, odd,
even. The patterns are predictable,
reassuring. They are the things a
parent teaches a child. Because
love and certainty are the building
blocks of happiness...*

EXT. TRIBUNAL - THE NEXT DAY

Guardsmen escort Gaal into--

INT. IMPERIAL TRIBUNAL - DAY

--a large hall full of TRANTOR'S ELITE. The people with the most to lose if Hari's predictions are correct.

As Gaal is led down, she notes

RAYCH AMONGST THE OBSERVERS

He makes eye contact, giving her a subtle nod of support.

GAAL (V.O.)

*But to know math the way I came to
truly know it, is to embrace
numbers irrational, and infinite,
and imaginary...*

AT THE TOP OF THE GALLERY SITS DEMERZEL

Impassive. Giving nothing. Young Cleon sits beside her.

Nearby, the Synnite Seer-Priest. He and Gaal exchange stares.

GAAL (V.O.)

*It is religion, not simply because
we spend lifetimes looking for
proof, or that it whispers of God..*

Gaal is guided to a table where Lors awaits in court attire.

GAAL (V.O.)

*...but because for some, when it
fails us, there is little left but
madness...*

ON HARI

Opaque. Mysterious. He turns to her, with a ghost of a smile.

HARI

Are you all right?

GAAL

The hook hurts but I'm trying not
to wriggle too much.

Hari nods. Maybe chastened? *Probably not.*

ADVOCATE XYLAS (40s, female, also in formal court attire) sits at a table opposite Gaal's. The Imperial "prosecutor".

FIVE MAGISTRATES, resplendent in gold and scarlet robes, preside from a raised platform at the head of the hall.

And then there are the GUARDSMEN. Conspicuously wielding ion carbines. Determined to keep order.

VID-DRONES hover about the hall, silently gliding from one recording vantage point to the next.

Just then, the CHAMBERLAIN strides to the center of the room.

CHAMBERLAIN

All rise.

Everyone but the Magistrates rise.

CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)

Glory to the Light Eternal. The tribunal of Cleon The Twelfth is convened. Advocate Xylas?

The rest of the room sits. Xylas approaches the Magistrates.

XYLAS

Your Exalted, the offenders, Doctor Hari Seldon and Gaal Dornick, are accused of crimes *so grave* they threaten not just Trantor, but the entire galaxy's *existence*. I intend to prove Doctor Seldon and his followers engaged in a conspiracy designed to destroy the confidence in our Empire and the fabric of our civilization.

A MURMUR through the gallery. Hostility at Hari and Gaal.

XYLAS (CONT'D)

Doctor Seldon, would you approach?

Hari rises and limps to the stand. He settles himself.

XYLAS (CONT'D)

You hail from the world of Helicon, yes?

HARI

Yes.

XYLAS

Would you state your current position here on Trantor?

HARI

I am a professor of probability theory at Streeling University. Specifically, the area of psychohistory.

XYLAS

Define that for us, please.

HARI

Psychohistory is a predictive model combining history, psychology, and mathematics designed to forecast the behavior of very large populations.

XYLAS

In plainspoken terms, you claim to be able to predict the future?

HARI

Well I don't know what you're having for dinner tonight, if that's what you're asking.

A number of people chuckle at that. Hari smiles.

XYLAS

You know what I'm asking. The Galactic Empire comprises over eight trillion individuals. Is that a large enough sample to make a prediction?

HARI

Yes.

XYLAS

And do you have a prediction for this particular sample?

HARI

I do.

(beat)

Trantor and the Galactic Empire will lie in ruins within the next five centuries.

THE GALLERY ERUPTS IN CHAOS--dignitaries rising, SHOUTING "Treason!" The Prime Magistrate gavel the crowd into--

PRIME MAGISTRATE

Silence!

The crowd settles down. Gaal blanches--now understanding how much Hari is provoking Trantor's elites. Xylas continues:

XYLAS

Accepting your statement for the moment, can you prove it's true?

HARI

(looking to Gaal)
Only to another mathematician
conversant in ordinal analysis.

Xylas smiles, pouncing on Hari's seeming condescension.

XYLAS

How convenient. So these
"truths" of yours...

HARI (CONT'D)

They're not my truths, they
belong to science--

XYLAS (CONT'D)

...are *so esoteric* that they escape
the grasp of nearly every citizen.
The Imperium has stood for *twelve
thousand years*, Doctor...

(playing to the crowd)

Are we really to believe it could be
gone in five hundred?

HARI

Maybe quicker.

Xylas raises an eyebrow at that. That's a bold claim.

XYLAS

Quicker? Because the Empire appears
strong, Dr. Seldon. Despite your
attempts to weaken it.

HARI

A rotten tree trunk appears strong
until the storm breaks it in two.
*Consider recent events in the Outer
Reach...*

Hari spots Demerzel at the top of the gallery. And we might wonder whether he's addressing this to her.

XYLAS

We're not here to listen to--

Hari cuts her off, shedding his placid, patient demeanor.

HARI

But you *will*.

(addressing the crowd)

The Empire *will* fall and order will vanish. Interstellar wars will be endless. Ten thousand worlds reduced to radioactive cinders. *Nothing we do can prevent that--*

The crowd erupts again, even more vociferously. Some of them try to rush the floor. And again, the gavel comes down--

PRIME MAGISTRATE

Silence! SILENCE!!!

Guardians intercept the unruly dignitaries, carbines raised.

GUARDIANS

GET BACK!!!

The crowd settles, cowed. Hari looks to his frightened grandchildren and mouths: "*I'm sorry*" to his wife.

A shaken Xylas straightens her outfit, approaches the stand.

XYLAS

This period of barbarism...how long do you claim it will last?

Hari pauses, knowing this will land like a bomb:

HARI

Thirty thousand years, Advocate.

MORE GASPS. Gaal looks to Lors, sotto:

GAAL

Is he *trying* to get us killed?

XYLAS

I would submit to the court that Doctor Seldon's predictions are actually intended to *destroy* public confidence. He uses *fear*, couched in the language of science, to raise himself up, to attract followers, and to what end?

HARI

I'm not a revolutionary.

XYLAS

Well then, *what are you?* You've already said the future can't be changed--so what, exactly, is the purpose of your project?

HARI

I'm trying to soften the fall.

A quiet comes over the tribunal. Gaal leans in towards Hari. He is serious now, sad. She feels his heart pleading.

HARI (CONT'D)

It can't be prevented, this...mass of events rushing towards us. But we can shorten the dark ages to come.

XYLAS

How much? If we embrace your "plan"? How much?

HARI

We would be in the dark for a thousand years. And if so, we should thank God for it.

XYLAS

And are you God, Dr. Seldon?

No answer is required here. Xylas bows to the Magistrates.

XYLAS (CONT'D)

I've no further questions for the moment, your Exulteds.

ON GAAL,

Impressed but disturbed by Hari's words.

INT. GAAL'S CELL - DAWN

Gaal sits on her cot, eyes red, having barely slept. Staring at a shaft of light issuing from a tiny window. Presently--

--FOOTSTEPS in the corridor outside. Her cell door open. TWO GUARDSMEN stand there, motioning for her to stand.

EXT. IMPERIAL GARDENS - DAY

As Gaal is led onto the lush grounds, her eyes widen--

Imagine a garden stretching for hundreds of km. Statues, fountains, FLORA and FAUNA plucked from hundreds of alien worlds, all carefully cultivated. We SEE:

--WALKING WILLOWS, trees that uproot themselves and move.

--CHAMELEONIC SUCCULENTS, color-shifting and camouflaging themselves as cuttlefish might via chromatophores.

JERRIL, the friendly salesman she met on the space elevator. He's sitting on a bench, taking in the sun. He smiles at her.

JERRIL

My name's not really Jerril, but you can keep calling me that.

He pats the bench beside him, indicating she should sit.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

I'm a director for the Committee of Public Safety.

Gaal sits, wary now. Replaying their meeting in her head.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

We've been watching you for some time. From the moment you solved the Abraxas Conjecture, in fact.

(then)

I brought you a gift.

He reaches into a pocket, pulling out the cube-like PRIME RADIANT that Hari showed Gaal earlier.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

He calls it the Prime Radiant.

Gaal doesn't take it. Jerril shrugs, inspecting the cube.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

Funny little trinket, isn't it? He claims it contains all of his predictions concerning the Empire, expressed as a mathematical equation.

(beat)

Did he allow you to examine it?

GAAL

No.

JERRIL

Don't you think that's curious? He devises a theory *so opaque* no one in the galaxy can understand it. And when he *finds* an individual who *can*...

(gesturing to Gaal)

...he doesn't allow her to look behind the curtain. Why?

Gaal considers that. Doesn't have an answer.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

Because history is littered with charlatans and false messiahs. And the Empire has a way of rooting most of them out.

GAAL

What if he's telling the truth?
What if psychohistory is real?

JERRIL

That's the question, isn't it? One you are uniquely suited to answer.

Jerril offers Gaal the Prime Radiant again. She hesitates, then takes it. He knew she would. *Forbidden fruit.*

JERRIL (CONT'D)

If his equations are flawed, you've a moral obligation to expose them.

GAAL

And if they hold true?

JERRIL

Disavow them and go home. And I promise you the Emperor will find a way to express his gratitude.

GAAL

We should just all bury our heads in the sand, then?

JERRIL

If his equations hold true, we, the Empire, will set about solving the problem. As we always have. Without terrifying trillions of people.

GAAL

So I should believe in you. A spy.

JERRIL

You should believe in the minds that built Trantor. That built the jump drive. That built the star bridge.

GAAL

Where I come from we call those scientists. Not politicians.

JERRIL

I know where you come from, Gaal. They were called heretics and drowned.

She lowers her head. He's a tough opponent.

JERRIL (CONT'D)

I also know what happened on the Jumpship.

(off her surprise)

During the jump. You were awake. You were aware. Why did you lie to me about it?

She chews on this. Doesn't want to answer. He waits her out.

GAAL

I don't know. It scares me.

JERRIL

What does?

GAAL

Being... different.

JERRIL

We're all different, Ms. Dornick. My sister didn't speak til she was seven and even then just nouns.

(beat)

You're something else. And if you don't know what it is, I'd urge you to figure it out before someone else does and uses it against you.

He smiles. As he goes:

GAAL

Don't forget. Where I come from? They drowned the politicians too.

He takes that in. She, too, is to be reckoned with.

FLASHBACK: GAAL'S FACE as **THE SCARRED WOMAN** runs a wet cloth over Gaal's prayer stones. The stones catch the light from the lantern aimed at her face.

WOMAN

Some like to pray one last time.

GAAL

Did you?

WOMAN

No.

Gaal's eyes well. After a beat: she moves her head "No."

The woman leans in with a gleaming razor. As she cuts we close on Gaal's eyes. She begins to cry. We hear the sound of a stone hitting a metal sink: PLINK.

INT. GAAL'S CELL - THAT NIGHT

On Gaal, fingering the leather bag. She sits with the Prime Radiant, lost in thought. Finally, she activates it--

GAAL (V.O.)

*When I was three my parents rowed
me out to sea and threw me from the
boat. A right of passage on Synnax.
I didn't know what death meant, but
I knew then what it was to be
afraid. And to be lost.*

ELABORATE EQUATIONS appear in the air, swirling around Gaal. Consuming her. Overwhelming. She works the problem, hard.

GAAL (V.O.)

*As I watched them row away, I
panicked, taking in water. Feeling
more alone than I'd ever felt.
Eventually, I stopped struggling
and stilled my body. The instinct
of a child inside the womb.*

Some part of the equation reveals itself to her. She begins moving the numbers around faster...

GAAL (V.O.)

*I could swim. Or I could die. And
so I swam.*

As she works, she becomes more engrossed. *She understands.*

INT. TRIBUNAL - DAY

The trial continues. Even MORE GUARDIANS are present now. Hari is on the stand again, Advocate Xylas pacing before him.

XYLAS

You claim your Plan can reduce the coming darkness... *how?*

HARI

The Ancients are rumored to have built a repository for the world's wisdom. According to myth, it burned down. I've proposed something less centralized. An Encyclopedia Galactica.

(beat)

After the fall, as civilization climbs from the ashes, the coming generations will have something to build upon. A Foundation. They won't have to reinvent the wheel or the compass. The knowledge will already exist.

XYLAS

Trantor already has an Imperial Library.

HARI

For how long?

XYLAS

That statement does bring us to the heart of the matter.

Xylas consults her holographic notes for dramatic purposes.

XYLAS (CONT'D)

You've said you could prove your theorem to someone conversant in ordinal analysis.

(turning to Gaal)

Gaal Dornick, please rise.

Gaal rises, nervous. Joining Hari on the stand. Camera drones hover closer. Gaal searches the hostile faces before her, eventually finding Jerril's.

XYLAS (CONT'D)

Your parents are farmers, yes?

(off her nod)

Could you please respond out loud?

GAAL

They harvest algae.

Xylas gestures and a HOLO-PORTRAIT OF GAAL'S PARENTS appears.

XYLAS

They look like hard workers. Do they own the farm?

GAAL

We're part of a collective.

XYLAS

So a group of farmers work it, but don't own it. Who does?

Gaal looks at her. Knows she's heading into a dark corner.

GAAL

The Church of the Seer.

And now there're murmurs in the audience. We find the Seer-Priest as he watches. Maybe a few glance to him.

XYLAS

Because you're from Synnax, correct? We should say that.

GAAL

I am.

XYLAS

You've had your prayer-stones removed. You almost look like one of us.

(Gaal flushes)

My understanding of your world, and I'll admit there's a lot that's incomprehensible to me, is that to remove the stones is to break from the Seer-Church. Is that right?

GAAL

That is Church Doctrine. Yes.

XYLAS

Tell me, is the Church still killing scientists and mathematicians?

Again, the crowd reacts. Some have probably heard of this.

GAAL

If you're talking about The Purge--

XYLAS

The Church's term is The Cleanse.
When was it, according to Church
Doctrine, that it stopped being
heresy to study math?

She sits quietly for a moment. Xylas waits.

GAAL

It never stopped.

CLOSE ON: the Seer-Priest. Eyes forward as people moan...

Gaal glances away, uncomfortable. Xylas approaches her.

XYLAS

You solved the Abraxas Conjecture. A
mathematical proof dating back
centuries.

GAAL

Yes.

XYLAS

On a world where they burned the
universities *to the ground*.

(beat)

You must have been...very lonely.

And here Gaal looks to Hari--Xylas's words echoing his.

XYLAS (CONT'D)

I can imagine given all that...what
it must have felt like to be
recognized by *Doctor Hari Seldon*.
To be given a job. To be valued--

GAAL

What do you want to know?

Xylas triggers another series of holo-images -- burnt
universities, mass drownings. Severe Seer-Priests.

XYLAS

*I want to know if there is any
possible way you can be objective
about Hari Seldon.*

This hits Gaal in the heart. She considers this seriously.
Glances at the Seer-Priest. His face betrays nothing.

GAAL

I don't know...Maybe I can't..Maybe that's why he brought me here.

Doubt closes in on Gaal. Xylas lets her sit with it. Lets the gallery wonder if she's going to crumble. *Lets Gaal wonder.*

XYLAS

All right. Last night, you were given a chance to assess the accuracy of Doctor Seldon's claims. Did you arrive at a conclusion?

GAAL

Yes.

Another MURMUR races through the crowd. And here, Jerril leans in. And so does Demerzel, high up in the stands.

Xylas rests her hands on the railing behind which Gaal sits.

XYLAS

And--?

Gaal glances at the holo of her homeworld, then to Jerril.

Shit. This is it. All eyes on her. She takes a deep breath--

GAAL

Doctor Seldon's calculations are correct. The Empire is dying.

Hari nods, satisfied--as the tribunal erupts into CHAOS.

Jerril shakes his head, disappointed. Raych seems *proud* of Gaal, but also *frightened* for her.

INT. HOLDING CELL - LATER

Lors enters. Gaal sits alone. He sits next to her. Uh oh.

LORS

It'll be announced very soon. I thought they might try to make it seem more of a fair fight but they didn't really bother.

GAAL

Did we?

He gives her a little smile.

LORS

The facts are the facts.

(then)

They knew you would side with him.

That's why they destroyed you.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Gaal is escorted out of the cell; the guardians march her towards the verdict announcement.

A DOOR OPENS and Hari comes out of his cell. He goes to touch her arm and a guard pushes it down. Off they're marched...

EXT. TRIBUNAL - DUSK

As Gaal and Hari are led up the tribunal steps, she pauses, looks up, as if *sensing* something unpleasant.

GAAL

Hari, the sky--

EXT. ORBITAL TERMINAL - SPACE

As before, dozens of spaceships docked at the terminal.

INT. EMBARKATION AREA - ORBITAL TERMINAL - SPACE

THOUSANDS OF TRAVELERS swarm the terminal, some assisted by PORTERS guiding hover platforms. And amidst them we find--

THE FRIENDLY PORTER

Gaal crossed paths with earlier, making eye contact with--

A HANDFUL OF OTHER TERMINAL WORKERS

Something is up with this group. A FEMALE WORKER breaks away, heads for a SECURED DOOR. She pulls a RAIL GUN PISTOL and SHOOTS the lock, KICKING IT OPEN--

INT. SERVER ROOM - ORBITAL TERMINAL - SPACE

The female worker takes out TWO SURPRISED COMPUTER JOCKEYS with a pair of expertly placed headshots.

She removes a HACKING DEVICE and adheres it to a server. It BEEPS, infecting all the servers around it.

INT. EMBARKATION AREA - ORBITAL TERMINAL - SPACE

Power FRITZES, causing all the lights and holo-displays, including the Emperor's image, to FLICKER and GO DARK--

Our smiling porter and his fellow terrorists all draw rail guns, FIRING at TRANSIT POLICE. Passengers stampede. The porter rushes through a deactivated body scanner portal onto--

THE CIRCULAR BALCONY where the passenger cars are descending.

The porter triggers a sub-dermal DETONATION NODE. A display FLASHES across his inner arm. A DIGITAL COUNTDOWN--

This guy's a suicide bomber! He raises a fist and SHOUTS--

SMILING PORTER

Death to the Light Eternal! Long
live the Outer Reach!!!

An ANTI-MATTER EXPLOSION atomizes the bomber.

THE WAVE OF DESTRUCTION KEEPS EXPANDING

Cracking the orbital terminal like an egg, DEPRESSURIZING IT!
Anything or anyone not bolted down are sucked into space.

EXT. ORBITAL TERMINAL - SPACE

It's horrible. Hundreds of bodies spasming in a cloud of debris. Blood vessels bursting in their eyes.

No longer attached as a counterweight, the crippled orbital terminal drifts free, rotating away from--

THE SEVERED SPACE ELEVATOR TETHER,

Which drops back towards Trantor's surface, carrying HUNDREDS OF PASSENGER AND FREIGHT CARS along with it!

INT. SPACE ELEVATOR CAR - SPACE

TERRIFIED PASSENGERS are screaming, in free-fall.

EXT. SPACE ELEVATOR ANCHOR TERMINAL - TRANTOR - NIGHT

30,000 KILOMETERS BELOW, the elevator tether begins coiling around its base, torquing madly, chewing through the anchor terminal like a gargantuan weed whacker--

But because Trantor is rotating beneath it--

EXT. TRANTOR - AS VIEWED FROM SPACE

-- the tether "drapes" around the planet's equator, falling westward away from the anchor terminal. IGNITING FROM FRICTION, knifing through the sky!

EXT. TRANTOR CITYSCAPE - VARIOUS - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

The view from the surface is apocalyptic. A "fiery whip" arcing from the heavens, creating SONIC BOOMS as it drops.

Chewing a FIVE KILOMETER-WIDE PATH OF DESTRUCTION through Trantor's industrialized "shell".

And it's not just Trantor's outer shell that's affected. The tether is SMASHING THROUGH MULTIPLE LEVELS BENEATH--

--CREATING A 2000 METER DEEP TRENCH that girdles the planet!

EXT. TRIBUNAL - DUSK (INTERCUT)

Hari, Gaal, and the Guardians look to the heavens -- they see a FLASH OF LIGHT streaking across the sky from East to West.

Then, a SHOCKWAVE thunders across the cityscape, knocking everyone off their feet.

INT. IMPERIAL LIBRARY - STACKS (INTERCUT)

Raych's accomplice, Reth, feels a RUMBLE. Books fall from the shelves and she snaps her head up, no time to scream as--

EXT. IMPERIAL LIBRARY (INTERCUT)

--THE BURNING TETHER CRASHES THROUGH, obliterating the stacks.

INT. CLEON¹²'S QUARTERS - DUSK (INTERCUT)

All three Cleons and Demerzel stand at a window, watching--

The fiery tether impacting, then draping itself across the force dome protecting the Imperial Palace!

EXT. TRANTOR'S OUTER SHELL - NIGHT

An IMPERIAL FLAGSHIP glides over Trantor's surface, flanked by GUARDIAN GUNSHIPS. Below the ships--

A SMOKING TRENCH STRETCHES FROM HORIZON TO HORIZON

A SCAR bisecting the planet-wide city. Mountains of burning debris and ruined structures paralleling either side of it.

INT. IMPERIAL FLAGSHIP - DAWN

Cleon¹² surveys the damage from his command deck, boiling with contained fury. Demerzel, Old and Young Cleon at his side.

YOUNG CLEON

Who did it? Anacreon or Thespis?

DEMERZEL

We don't know yet, child.

Old Cleon looks to Cleon, considers speaking. For once the old man is at a loss, as is the Emperor.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - THRONE ROOM - LATER

Ambassador Xandem and Diplomat Shae Un Shae sit with their delegations before the empty throne. Terri-fucking-fied.

Cleon enters, sits on the throne. Cold as ice.

CLEON¹²

The tether wrapped around the planet. Like a garrote. It cut fifty levels down.

AMBASSADOR XANDEM

Emperor--

CLEON¹²

Shut the fuck up.

(beat)

There are reports of both Anacreon and Thespin war cries before the explosion. Songs of rebellion.

SHAE UN SHAE

We had no part of this, we swear--

CLEON¹²

We will, of course, be returning your gifts.

He stands and walks out of the room. The diplomats look to each other--both panicked and without a clue how to proceed.

INT. 47TH LEVEL - VARIOUS STREETS - TRANTOR - DAY

More chaos. IMPOVERISHED MASSES milling about, pointing up--

WE FIND RAYCH. He stops at the swath of ruin caused by the star bridge's fall--

NAKED SUNLIGHT FILTERS DOWN FROM ABOVE

It's as if L-47 were at the bottom of a slot canyon now.

Everyone gapes at the newly exposed cross-sections of the levels atop theirs. An ironic byproduct of the devastation.

INT. GAAL'S CELL - DAY

Gaal stands at the window, watching smoke rise across the planet-wide city. Her cell door opens and a Guardian enters.

RAYCH STEPS INTO THE ROOM. He looks haggard, spent.

GAAL

What are you doing here?

RAYCH

I petitioned the Committee.

(drawing closer)

They believe over three hundred million dead. The Outer Reaches may be in rebellion.

She can't believe the numbers. It's devastating.

RAYCH (CONT'D)

Hari said there was a non-zero chance you would die. But non-zero is still a number. A real number.

(then, plaintive)

They're going to kill Hari, Gaal. And anyone standing next to him.

GAAL

Including you?

RAYCH

I knew my place in this. You didn't.

GAAL

(accepting)

I do now.

RAYCH

If Hari dies today his Plan is destroyed. You don't have to die with it.

GAAL

I've already said it was true.

RAYCH

Say you looked at it again. Say you were wrong.

Gaal stares at Raych, registering his pain.

GAAL

You've lost faith.

RAYCH

I'm sorry.

At that moment GUARDIANS FLOOD THE ROOM, armed with STUN RODS. One of them carrying a sensory shroud.

RAYCH (CONT'D)

She doesn't need that--

The Guardians slap a pair of FORCE CUFFS onto Gaal's wrists. A Guardian STUNS Raych. As he crumples, Gaal SCREAMS--

--then the sensory shroud is slipped over her head, activating and adhering itself skin-tight as everything--

CUTS TO BLACK.

FLASHBACK: A lantern illuminates an old mirror on a wall. In the reflection we see GAAL, EIGHT SMALL STITCHED WOUNDS ON HER CHEEKS, EACH WEEPING BLOOD.

GAAL (V.O.)

When a planet wants you dead, you die.

GAAL GASPS as the sensory shroud is deactivated. And she's--

INT. IMPERIAL THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

--at the foot of the three thrones. Older and Younger Cleon flank Cleon¹², with Demerzel off to the side as before.

Young Cleon plays with a TOY HOLO-SPHERE OF THE GALAXY.

CLEON¹²

Get up.

Gaal rises, shaky. Hari is next to her.

HARI

Shall I speak first? Or will you?

CLEON¹²

By all means, Doctor Seldon. Speak.

HARI

I assume you hold us responsible?

CLEON¹²

How can I not? Your words have emboldened the Imperium's enemies.

HARI

You mistake correlation for causation. One assumes that because two events occurred in succession, the former event must have caused--

Suddenly, Young Cleon drops his holo-sphere. It rolls across the floor, coming to a rest near Hari's feet. Hari and Gaal glance down at it. Do they dare pick it up?

Young Cleon also glances at his "father". Should he fetch it? Everything hangs in equipoise. Then--

OLD MAN CLEON

Oh for fuck's sake--

Old Cleon rises and crosses to Hari, scooping up the globe and returning to the thrones.

HARI

My science can predict *societal actions*, not individual ones.

(beat)

But I'm not surprised it happened.

CLEON¹²

Why is that?

HARI

Because you're stretched too thin. That's why the Kingdoms of the Outer Reach struck first. Who can blame them?

(then)

Sensing vulnerability, other players will soon apply downward pressure. Within a generation, an exhortation from one of the galaxy's major religions is a given. A homegrown insurrection here on Trantor--

CLEON¹²

You don't sound like a mathematician. You sound like a revolutionary.

HARI

The two aren't as far apart as you would think.

CLEON¹²

Tell me why I shouldn't kill you
and your followers right now.

Gaal boldly steps forward...

GAAL

If you *do*, you'll be dead within
the year.

CLEON¹²

The prodigy speaks.

Gaal doesn't know if she should continue.

CLEON¹² (CONT'D)

So speak.

GAAL

(gathering herself)
Your agent Jerril asked me to check
Dr. Seldon's work. I went a little
farther in the equation. If you
kill him the Fall *accelerates*.

CLEON¹²

Well that's a convenient data point
for your side.

HARI

Only my plan can shorten the
darkness. Kill me, you kill hope.
Kill hope, they'll kill you.

CLEON¹²

Imagine the odds. The only two
people who can save the galaxy are
in this room. And one of them is
wrong.

HARI

I agree.

Cleon gives him a slow smile. Hari gives him the same smile
back, *only slower*. Cleon considers humoring him.

CLEON¹²

If the fall can be accelerated, can
it also not be slowed?

HARI

Yes. By a few centuries.

CLEON¹²
(intrigued)
Don't keep us in the dark.

Hari glances at all three Cleons. Pointed:

HARI
End Imperial Cloning.

Old Cleon SMASHES the Holo-Globe onto the ground. Quiet.
Cleon¹² ignores the outburst.

CLEON¹²
Our genetic dynasty has reigned for
almost four centuries.
(re: the three of them)
Each successive iteration improves
upon the previous.
(re: Gaal)
Certainly you can see the value in
a younger mind that shares your
intellect?

HARI
I see the value in *difference*. In
the new.
(re: Young Cleon)
You offer nothing new. Just a
younger grape from the same
vineyard. Destined for the same
bottle.

Cleon¹² loses patience, makes a gesture to Demerzel. The doors
are thrown open and a dozen guardians march in--

HARI (CONT'D)
You can't save yourself but you can
save your legacy.

CLEON¹²
(as they're dragged off)
Mine or yours, Dr. Seldon?

INT. MURAL OF SOULS - IMPERIAL PALACE - LATER

Cleon¹² and Demerzel stroll along the colossal fresco, passing
moments depicting the Empire's grand history. Cleon¹² pauses
at a *specific* event -- his own coronation.

DEMERZEL
Your Ascension to Day. It seems
like only yesterday.

CLEON¹²

For you, perhaps.

FURTHER DOWN, OLD MAN CLEON WORKS ON A SCAFFOLDING

Painting something at the leading edge of the mural. The *most recent* event--THE STAR BRIDGE'S FALL. Beyond it, the wall is blank. A future yet to be written.

Old Man Cleon works with magnifying lenses. Troweling sand and lime onto the wall, applying pigment. An archaic process.

CLEON¹² (CONT'D)

That's beautiful work, Brother Dusk.
In the style of Rowan if I remember
my lessons of Anacreon art.

OLD MAN CLEON

He was always a favorite of mine.
Killed by his king for an
unflattering portrait of the queen.
An accurate likeness, apparently.

CLEON¹²

(to Demerzel)

I believe this is Brother Dusk's
way of saying we not reward
Seldon's boldness with mercy.

OLD MAN CLEON

It is my way of saying: do not
overthink the stick.

DEMERZEL

(to Cleon)

Nor should we underestimate what
future brothers might think when
studying lessons of you.

CLEON¹²

Now you sound like Seldon.

Demerzel picks up a WOODEN PAINT BRUSH. Hands it to Cleon.

DEMERZEL

Sticks are complicated.

Cleon mulls on that, contemplating the blank, unknown future stretching out in front of him.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The table set for three. Cleon stands over one of the place settings, carefully re-aligning all of the flatware. He sits down in a chair. Young Cleon appears in the doorway.

YOUNG CLEON
That's not your chair.

CLEON¹²
No. Not yet.

Cleon gestures him over. He goes to his own chair but Cleon points for him to take the other empty one (Cleon's). *Really? Yes, really.* Young Cleon sits in the Emperor's chair.

CLEON¹² (CONT'D)
What I leave you will be better
than what was left me. I promise.

YOUNG CLEON
I believe you.

He stands up, kisses the boy on the head.

CLEON¹²
And you're *already* an improvement.

He exits, leaving him there, the head of the table.

INT. GAAL'S CELL - DAWN

Gaal sits, waiting to die. She whispers a prayer.

GAAL
86963761...86963777...86963791...

EXT. TRIBUNAL - DAY

The air is charged, taut. CROWDS have gathered, staring quietly as Guardians escort Gaal and Hari up the steps.

INT. TRIBUNAL - DAY

As they are led into the raked auditorium, Gaal pauses--the tribunal is completely empty. The Guardians depart, their heavy FOOTFALLS echoing in the vast room. Gaal looks to Hari--

GAAL
What's--?

Just then, a SECRET DOOR behind the magistrate podium opens--

Cleon¹² and Demerzel emerge, approaching them.

DEMERZEL

The Emperor has determined that your deaths are not the optimal outcome for the good of the Imperium.

Hari cocks an eyebrow, looks to Cleon¹².

DEMERZEL (CONT'D)

You will be allowed to refine your work on psychohistory, to build your Foundation--

(dropping the other shoe)

--but not on Trantor.

Gaal looks to Hari: *what the hell is going on?* Demerzel triggers a HOLOGRAPHIC DISPLAY: Terminus and its four moons.

DEMERZEL (CONT'D)

Terminus. It is uninhabited. Sitting in the Periphery, along the galaxy's Outer Reach.

HARI

Anacreon and Thespis are also in the Periphery...

DEMERZEL

Yes. The Barbarian Kingdoms will be your neighbors.

(then)

You will journey via slow-ship. The Empire forbids you access to jump-drive technology.

GAAL

You're exiling us.

DEMERZEL

On Terminus, you will not trouble Trantor and there will be no disturbance of the Emperor's peace. The Galaxy will know that you are fighting the Fall. They will even be told that you will prevent the Fall. If psychohistory proves fraudulent...your Foundation will be allowed to wither and vanish.

HARI

And if it's successful, you'll co-opt it and bolster your regime.

Gaal looks at Hari--he seems deflated. Defeated.

Cleon¹² smiles.

EXT. TRIBUNAL - DUSK

Hari and Gaal exit. Gaal is in a state of shock.

FAR OVERHEAD,

ANTIGRAVITY TUGS are removing the blackened lengths of space elevator still draped across the Palace's force dome, which are still casting a VAST SHADOW over the Palace grounds.

GAAL

(still reeling)

Terminus. I've never even *heard* of it.

HARI

There's no reason you would. It's 50,000 light years away. Without a jump-drive, the journey there...

HARI (CONT'D)

Nineteen hundred days.

GAAL

Eighteen hundred seventy-eight days.

HARI (CONT'D)

Approximately.

(upbeat now)

We'll be fine. There will be hardships, no question. Terminus orbits a red dwarf. Its seasons are extreme. It's metal and mineral-poor...

GAAL

You know it well...

(then, realizing)

Exile was always the Plan.

HARI

(upbeat now)

And Terminus was always our optimal location. Out in the Periphery, we'll have Imperial support without Imperial eyes. It's perfect.

GAAL

How many others knew?

HARI

Only Raych.

She looks away.

HARI (CONT'D)

I know he came to see you. I know what he asked you to do. Don't be disappointed in him. He can't see the things we can see. Even believers lose their way sometimes.

(then, curious)

What you said to Cleon. Did you really look that deep into the math?

GAAL

I did.

HARI

And what did you actually see?

GAAL

I couldn't figure it.

HARI

So you lied.

GAAL

I didn't lie. *I hypothesized.*

He smiles at her. A young woman after his own heart.

HARI

The ancients didn't have our skills but they were still able to see seven generations ahead. Even then, it didn't save them.

(beat)

If we're going to survive, we need to look even *farther*. Forty generations. You're going to have to help me do that.

Gaal processes that. Hari's brilliant. But *tricky*. Then--

GAAL SEES RAYCH,

watching them from afar. Hesitant to approach. Ashamed he lost faith in Hari at a crucial moment.

She slows, wanting to give him some sign of encouragement.

HARI (CONT'D)

(noting her concern)

He'll find his way back.

(MORE)

HARI (CONT'D)

This isn't the Foundation's first crisis and it won't be our last.

Hari keeps walking. Gaal follows.

GAAL

Something tells me you already know what the next one will be.

At the same time, the antigravity tugs above pull the tether from the force dome, allowing more SUNLIGHT to illuminate--

HARI

(turning to the Tribunal)
Oh, I've an *inkling*...

THE ANACREON AND THESPIN DELEGATES

Being marched past them by Imperial Guardians. Hands bound behind their backs. Heads blinded by sensory shrouds.

The Emperor's Peace will be maintained.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERMINUS - AS SEEN FROM SPACE

On the night side, we see a tiny GROUPING OF LIGHTS -- the only sign of habitation on this barren world.

GAAL (V.O.)

Hari had planned for it all. Things only he saw over the horizon. The struggle for Terminus, the rise of the Techno-priests, the Empire's eventual war on the Foundation...

WE PUSH TOWARDS the settlement, dominated by the FOUNDATION TOWER, a beacon atop its roof piercing the night.

EXT. SALVOR'S YURT/OBSERVATORY - JUST BEFORE DAWN (TERMINUS)

A small observatory perched on a secluded up-valley ridge. Salvor's aircar parked outside.

SUPER TITLE: "TERMINUS, 35 YEARS LATER"

INT. SALVOR'S YURT/OBSERVATORY - JUST BEFORE DAWN (TERMINUS)

Salvor wakes with a start, sits up, listening to the night.

EXT. TERMINUS SETTLEMENT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Salvor's aircar speeds towards the center of town.

GAAL (V.O.)

*He could forecast the behavior of
entire populations with stunning
accuracy...*

EXT. THE VAULT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

We are back at that mysterious object. Massive, hovering above the ground.

GAAL (V.O.)

*...but when it came to individuals,
things got murkier. And I couldn't
help but wonder...*

ANGLE ON SALVOR

Descending from the rise. Pausing at the edge of the Null Field.

She crouches, studying the Vault. *Almost as if she were communing with it.* Then, glancing about to confirm no one is watching her--

GAAL (V.O.)

*When he was planning our course of
future history...*

--Salvor confidently STEPS INTO THE NULL FIELD.

She moves past the landmark rock, past the last cluster of markers, including Poly's new one. She is unfazed, Salvor.

On she walks towards the Vault. She reaches the area where the ground is clean of markers. NO ONE gets this far.

Salvor stops directly BENEATH THE VAULT. LOOKS UP AT IT. TOUCHES ITS UNDERSIDE WITH HER HAND.

GAAL (V.O.)

*...did he worry whether or not a
single person could steer things
off-track?*

CUT TO BLACK.

GAAL (V.O.)

*I think he did. And I think that's
what he feared the most.*

(MORE)

GAAL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

END PILOT