



1.

Mandell Gruber was a happy man. He seemed so to Hari Seldon, certainly. Seldon stopped his morning constitutional to watch him. Gruber, perhaps in his late forties, a few years younger than Seldon, was a bit gnarled from his continuing work on the Imperial Palace grounds, but he had a cheerful, smoothly shaven face, topped by a pink skull, not much of which was hidden by his thin, sandy hair. He whistled softly to himself as he inspected the leaves of the bushes for any signs of insect infestation beyond the ordinary.

He was not the Chief Gardener, of course. The Chief Gardener of the Imperial Palace Grounds was a high functionary who had a palatial office in one of the buildings of the enormous Imperial complex, with an army of men and women under him. The chances are he did not step out onto the grounds oftener than once or twice a year.

Gruber was one of the army. His title, Seldon knew, was Gardener First-Class, and it had been well-earned, with nearly thirty years of faithful service.

Seldon called to him as he paused on the perfectly level crushed gravel walk.

“Another marvelous day, Gruber.”

Gruber looked up and his eyes twinkled. “Yes, indeed, First Minister, and it's sorry I am for those cooped-up indoors.”

“You mean as I am about to be.”

“There's not much about you, First Minister, for people to sorrow over, but if you're disappearing into those buildings on a day like this, it's a bit of sorrow that we fortunate few can feel for you.”

“I thank you for your sympathy, Gruber, but you know we have forty billion Trantorians under the dome. Are you sorry for all of them?”

I am looking at it right now, aren't I?

"I mean the plans spread out so you can really appreciate it all, and marvelous it is, too. It was planned by Tapper Savand, over three hundred years ago, and it has been little changed since. Tapper was a great horticulturist, the greatest—and he came from my planet."

"That was Anacreon, wasn't it?"

"Indeed. A far-off world near the edge of the galaxy, where there is still wilderness and life can be sweet. I came here when I was still an ear-wet lad, when the present Chief Gardener took power under the old Emperor. Of course, now they're talking of re-designing the grounds." Gruber sighed deeply and shook his head. "That would be a mistake. They are just right as they are now, properly proportioned, well-balanced, pleasing to the eye and spirit. But it is true that in history, the grounds have occasionally been re-designed. Emperors grow tired of the old, and are always seeking the new, as if new is somehow always better. Our present Emperor, may he live long, has been planning re-design with the Chief Gardener. At least that is the word that runs from gardener to gardener."

This last he added quickly, as if abashed at spreading Palace gossip.

"It might not happen soon."

"I hope not, First Minister. Please, if you have the chance to take some time from all the heart-stopping work you must be after doing, study the design of the grounds. It is a rare beauty and, if I had my way, there should not be a leaf moved out of place, nor a flower, nor a rabbit, anywhere in all these hundreds of square kilometers.'

Seldon smiled. "You are a dedicated man, Gruber. I would not be surprised if someday you were Chief Gardener."

"May Fate protect me from that. The Chief Gardener breathes no fresh air, sees no natural sights, and forgets all he has learned of nature. He lives there,"

Gruber pointed, scornfully, "and I think he no longer knows a bush from a stream unless one of his underlings leads him out and places his hand on one or dips it into the other."

gratitude.

Seldon was smiling as he passed on, but the smile faded as his mind turned once more to his current problems. Ten years as First Minister—and if Gruber knew how heartily sick Seldon was of his position, his sympathy would rise to enormous heights. Could Gruber grasp the fact that Seldon's progress in the techniques of Psychohistory showed promise of facing him with an unbearable dilemma?

2.

Seldon's thoughtful stroll across the grounds was the epitome of peace. It was hard to believe, here in the midst of the Emperor's immediate domain, that he was on a world that except for this area was totally enclosed by a dome. Here, in this spot, he might be on his home world of Helicon, or Gruber's world of Anacreon.

Of course, the sense of peace was an illusion. The grounds were guarded—thick with security.

Once, a thousand years ago, the Imperial Palace grounds, much less palatial, much less differentiated from a world only beginning to construct domes over individual regions, had been open to all citizens and the Emperor himself could walk along the paths, unguarded, nodding his head in greeting to his subjects.

No more. Now security was in place and no one from Trantor itself could possibly invade the grounds. That did not remove the danger, however, for that, when it came, came from discontented Imperial functionaries and from corrupt and suborned soldiers. It was within the grounds that the Emperor and his ministers were most in danger. What would have happened if on that occasion, nearly ten years before, Seldon had not been accompanied by Dors Venabili?

It had been in his first year as First Minister and it was only natural, he supposed (after the fact), that there would be heart-burning over his unexpected choice for the post. Many others, far better qualified in training, in years of service, and, most of all, in their own eyes, could view the

she raced toward the sergeant.

“Give me that blaster, sergeant,” she said tightly.

The would-be assassin, momentarily immobilized by the unexpected sight of a woman running toward him, now reacted quickly, raising the drawn blaster. But she was already at him, her hand enclosing his right wrist in a steely grip and lifting his arm high. “Drop it,” she said through clenched teeth.

The sergeant's face twisted as he attempted to yank loose his arm.

“Don't try, sergeant,” said Venabili. “My knee is three inches from your groin, and, if you so much as blink, your genital equipment will be history. So just freeze. That's right. Okay, now open your hand. If you don't drop the blaster right now I will break your arm.”

A gardener came running up with a rake. Venabili motioned him away. The blaster dropped.

Seldon had arrived. “I'll take over, Dors.”

“You will not. Get in among those trees, and take the blaster with you. Others may be involved, and ready.”

Venabili had not loosed her grip on the sergeant. She said, “Now, sergeant, I want the name of whoever it was who persuaded you to make an attempt on the First Minister's life, and the name of everyone else who is in this with you.”

The sergeant was silent.

“Don't be foolish,” said Venabili. “Speak!” She twisted his arm and he sunk to his knees. She put her shoe on his neck. “If you think silence becomes you, I can crush your larynx and you will be silent forever. And even before that I am going to damage you badly—I won't leave one bone unbroken. You had better talk.”

The sergeant talked.

Later, Seldon had said to her, “How could you do that, Dors? I never believed you capable of such, such ... violence.”

Venabili said coolly, “I did not actually hurt him much, Hari. The threat was sufficient. In any case, your safety was paramount.”

if she could not stand the thought of the traitorous sergeant being put to death even though he would have cut down her beloved Hari without a second thought.

“But,” she exclaimed, “there is no need to execute the conspirators. Exile will do the job.”

“No, it won’t,” said Seldon. “It’s too late. Cleon will hear of nothing but executions. I can quote him, if you wish.”

“You mean he’s already made up his mind?”

“At once. I told him that exile or imprisonment would be all that was necessary, but he said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Every time I try to solve a problem by direct and forceful action, first Demerzel and then you talk of despotism and tyranny. But this is my palace. These are my grounds. These are my guards. My safety depends on the security of this place and the loyalty of my people. Do you think that any deviation from absolute loyalty can be met with anything but instant death? How else would you be safe? How else would I be safe?’

“I said there would have to be a trial. ‘Of course,’ he said, ‘a short military trial, and I don’t expect a single vote for anything but execution. I shall make that quite clear.’”

Venabili looked appalled. “You’re taking this very quietly. Do you agree with the Emperor?”

Reluctantly, Seldon nodded. “I do.”

“Because there was an attempt on your life. Have you abandoned principle for revenge?”

“Now, Dors. I’m not a vengeful person. However, it was not myself alone that was at risk, far less the Emperor—if there is anything that the recent history of the Empire shows us, it is that Emperors come and go. It is Psychohistory that must be protected. Undoubtedly, even if something happens to me, Psychohistory will someday be developed, but the Empire is falling fast, and we cannot wait, and only I have advanced far enough to obtain the necessary techniques in time.”

“You should perhaps teach what you know to others, then?” said Venabili gravely.

to detachments on the Outer Worlds.

Since then, there had been no whisper of disloyalty and so notorious had become the care with which the First Minister was guarded, to say nothing of the terrifying woman who watched over him, that it was no longer necessary for Dors to accompany him everywhere. Her invisible presence was an adequate shield, and the Emperor Cleon enjoyed nearly ten years of quiet, and of absolute security.

Now, however, Psychohistory was finally reaching the point where predictions of a sort could be made, and, as Seldon crossed the grounds in his passage from his office (First Minister) to his laboratory (Psychohistorian), he was uneasily aware of the likelihood that this era of peace might be coming to an end.

3.

Yet even so, Hari Seldon could not repress the surge of satisfaction that he felt as he entered his laboratory.

How things had changed.

It had begun eighteen years earlier with his own doodlings on his second-rate Heliconian computer. It was then that the first hint of what was to become para-chaotic math came to him in cloudy fashion.

Then there were the years at Streeling University when he and Yugo Amaryl, working together, attempted to renormalize the equations, get rid of the inconvenient infinities, and find a way around the worst of the chaotic effects.

They made very little progress indeed.

But now, after ten years as First Minister, he had a whole floor of the latest computers and a whole staff of people working on a large variety of problems. Of necessity, none of his staff, except for Yugo and himself, of course, could really know much more than the immediate problem they were dealing with. Each of them worked with only a small ravine or outcropping on the gigantic mountain range of Psychohistory that only Seldon and Amaryl could see as a mountain range—and even they could see it only dimly, its peaks hidden in clouds, its slopes in mist.

was, and yet Amaryl was not Dahlite at all. He lacked the mustache, he lacked the accent, he lacked, it would seem, any Dahlite consciousness. He had even been impervious to the lure of Jojo Joranum, who had appealed so thoroughly to the people of Dahl. It was as though Amaryl recognized no sectional patriotism, no planetary patriotism, not even Imperial patriotism. He belonged, completely and entirely, to Psychohistory.

Seldon felt a twinge of insufficiency. He, himself, remained conscious of his first three decades on Helicon and there was no way he could keep from thinking of himself as a Heliconian. He wondered if that consciousness was not sure to betray him by causing him to skew his thinking about Psychohistory. Ideally, to use Psychohistory properly, one should be above sectors and worlds and deal only with humanity in the faceless abstract, and this was what Amaryl did.

And Seldon didn't, he admitted to himself, sighing silently.

Amaryl said, "We are making progress, Hari, I suppose."

"You suppose, Yugo? Merely suppose?"

"I don't want to jump into outer space without a suit." He said this quite seriously (he did not have much of a sense of humor, Seldon knew) and they moved into their private office. It was small, but it was also well-shielded.

Amaryl sat down and crossed his legs. He said, "Your latest scheme for getting around chaos may be working in part—at the cost of sharpness, of course."

"Of course. What we gain in the straightaway, we lose in the roundabouts. That's the way the universe works. We've just got to fool it somehow."

"We've fooled it a little bit. It's like looking through frosted glass."

"Better than the years we spent trying to look through lead."

Amaryl muttered something to himself, then said, "We can catch glimmers of light and dark."

"Explain!"

"I can't, but I have the Prime Radiant, which I've been working on like a—a—"



surface, as if suspended by invisible marionette strings.

Seldon said, "Wonderful. Some day, if we live long enough, we'll have the Prime Radiant produce a river of mathematical symbolism that will chart past and future history. In it we can find currents and rivulets and work out ways of changing them in order to make them follow other currents and rivulets that we would prefer."

"Yes," said Amaryl dryly, "if we can manage to live with the knowledge that the actions we take, which we will mean for the best, may turn out to be for the worst."

"Believe me, Yugo, I never go to bed at night without that particular thought gnawing at me. Still, we haven't come to it yet. All we have is this—which, as you say, is no more than seeing light and dark fuzzily through frosted glass."

"True enough."

"And what is it you think you see, Yugo?" Seldon watched Amaryl closely, a little grimly. He was gaining weight, getting just a bit pudgy. He spent too much time bent over the computers (and now over the Prime Radiant), and not enough in physical activity. And, though he saw a woman now and then, Seldon knew, he had never married. A mistake! Even a workaholic is forced to take time off to satisfy a mate, to take care of the needs of the children.

Seldon thought of his own still-trim figure and of the manner in which Dors strove to make him keep it that way.

Amaryl said, "What do I see? The Empire is in trouble."

"The Empire is always in trouble."

"Yes, but it's more specific. There's a possibility that we may have trouble at the center."

"At Trantor?"

"I presume. Or at the Periphery. Either there will be a bad situation here, perhaps civil war, or the outlying provinces will begin to break away."

"Surely it doesn't take Psychohistory to point out these possibilities."

Seldon pursed his lips, then said slowly, "I can tell you which alternative is preferable. Let the Periphery go and keep Trantor."

"Really?"

"No question. We must keep Trantor stable if for no other reason than that we're here."

"Surely our own comfort isn't the decisive point."

"No, but Psychohistory is. What good will it do us to keep the Periphery intact, if conditions on Trantor force us to stop work on Psychohistory? I don't say that we'll be killed, but we may be unable to work. The development of Psychohistory is on what our fate will depend. As for the Empire, if the Periphery secedes it will only begin a disintegration that may take a long time to reach the core."

"Even if you're right, Hari, what do we do to keep Trantor stable?"

"To begin with, we have to think about it."

A silence fell between them, and then Seldon said, "Thinking doesn't make me happy. What if the Empire is altogether on the wrong track, and has been for all its history? I think of that every time I talk to Gruber."

"Who's Gruber?"

"Mandell Gruber. A gardener."

"Oh. The one who came running up with the rake to rescue you at the time of the assassination attempt."

"Yes. I've always been grateful to him for that. He had only a rake against possibly other conspirators with blasters. That's loyalty. Anyhow, talking to him is like a breath of cool wind. I can't spend all my time talking to court officials and to Psychohistorians."

"Thank you."

"Come! You know what I mean. Gruber likes the open. He wants the wind and the rain and the biting cold and everything else that raw weather can bring to him. I miss it myself sometimes."

"I don't. I wouldn't care if I never went out there."

"You were brought up under the dome—but suppose the Empire consisted of simple unindustrialized worlds, living by herding and farming, with thin populations and empty spaces. Wouldn't we all be better off?"

follow we don't know. If, through Psychohistory, we manage to prevent the fall or, more likely, force a recovery after the fall, is that merely to insure another period of overheating? Is that the only future humanity has, to push the boulder, like Sisyphus, up to the top of a hill only in order to see it roll to the bottom again?"

"Who's Sisyphus?"

"A character in a primitive myth. Amaryl, you must do more reading."

Amaryl shrugged. "So I can learn about Sisyphus? Not important. Perhaps Psychohistory will show us a path to an entirely new society, one altogether different from anything we have seen, one that would be stable and desirable."

"I hope so," sighed Seldon. "I hope so, but there's no sign of it yet. For the near future, we will just have to labor to let the Periphery go. That will mark the beginning of the Fall of the Galactic Empire."

4.

"And so I said," said Hari Seldon. "That will mark the beginning of the Fall of the Galactic Empire. And so it will, Dors."

Dors listened, tight-lipped. She accepted Seldon's First Ministership as she accepted everything—calmly. Her only mission was to protect him and his Psychohistory, but that task, she well knew, was made harder by his position. The best security was to go unnoticed and as long as the sun of office shone down upon Seldon, not all the physical barriers in existence would be satisfactory, or sufficient.

The luxury in which they now lived; the careful shielding from spy-beams, as well as from physical interference; the advantages to her own historical research of being able to make use of nearly unlimited funds, did not satisfy her. She would gladly have exchanged it all for their old quarters at Streeling University. Or better yet, for a nameless apartment in a nameless sector where no one knew them.

"That's all very well, Hari dear," she said, "but it's not enough."

"What's not enough?"

the Periphery are, in actual fact, closer to independence than they have ever been. If one of them arises with particular ambitions—”

“Can you tell which one it might be?”

“Not in the least. All we can force out of Psychohistory at this stage is the definite knowledge that if a governor of unusual ability and ambition arises, he would find conditions more suitable for his purposes than he would have in the past. It could be other things, too, some great natural disaster, or sudden civil war between two distant world coalitions. None of that can be precisely predicted as of now, but we can tell that anything of the sort that happens will have more serious consequences than it would have had a century ago.”

“But if you don't know a little more precisely what will happen in the Periphery, how can you so guide actions as to make sure the Periphery goes, rather than Trantor?”

“By keeping a close eye on both and trying to stabilize Trantor and not trying to stabilize the Periphery. We can't expect Psychohistory to order events automatically without much greater knowledge of its workings, so we have to make use of constant manual controls, so to speak. In days to come, the technique will be refined and the need for manual control will decrease.”

“But that,” said Dors, “is in days to come. Right?”

“Right. And even that is only a hope.”

“And just what kind of instabilities threaten Trantor, if we hang on to the Periphery?”

“The same possibilities—economic and social factors, natural disasters, ambitious rivalries among high officials. And something more. I have described the Empire to Yugo as being overheated—and Trantor is the most overheated portion of all. It seems to be breaking down. The infrastructure—water supply, heating, waste disposal, fuel lines, everything—seems to be having unusual problems, and that's something I've been turning my attention to more and more lately.”

“What about the death of the Emperor?”

they had, the Emperor, one way or another—

“Probably not. He would have been more useful as a figurehead. And in any case, forget it. Joranum died last year in Nishaya, a rather pathetic figure.”

“He had followers.”

“Of course. Everyone has followers. Did you ever come across the Globalist party on my native world of Helicon in your studies of the early history of the Empire and of the Kingdom of Trantor?”

“No, I haven't. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Hari, but I don't recall coming across any piece of history in which Helicon played a role.”

“I'm not hurt, Dors. Happy the world without a history, I always say. —In any case, about twenty-four hundred years ago, there arose a group of people on Helicon who were quite convinced that Helicon was the only inhabited globe in the universe. Helicon was the universe and beyond it there was only a solid sphere of sky speckled with tiny stars.”

“How could they believe that?” said Dors. “They were part of the Empire, I presume.”

“Yes, but Globalists insisted that all evidence to the effect that the Empire existed was either illusion or deliberate deceit; that Imperial emissaries and officials were Heliconians playing a part for some reason. They were absolutely immune to reason.”

“And what happened?”

“I suppose it's always pleasant to think that your particular world is the world. At their peak, the Globalists may have persuaded ten percent of the population of the planet to be part of the movement. Only ten percent, but they were a vehement minority that drowned out the indifferent majority and threatened to take over.”

“But they didn't, did they?”

“No, they didn't. What happened was that Globalism caused a diminishing of Imperial trade and the Heliconian economy slid into the doldrums. When the belief began to affect the pocketbook of the population, it lost popularity rapidly. The rise and fall puzzled many at the

surprising if there weren't still some remnants left. There may still be some remnants a thousand years from now."

"Isn't it possible that a remnant may be dangerous?"

"I doubt it. It was JoJo's charisma that made it dangerous and he's dead. He didn't even die a heroic death or one that was in any way remarkable; just withered away and died in exile, a broken man."

Dors stood up and walked the length of the room quickly, her arms swinging at her sides and her fists clenching. She returned and stood before the seated Seldon.

"Hari," she said, "let me speak my mind. If Psychohistory points to the possibility of serious disturbances on Trantor then, if there are Joranumites still left, they may still be aiming for the death of the Emperor."

Seldon laughed nervously. "You jump at shadows, Dors. Relax."

But he found that he could not dismiss what she had said quite that easily.

5.

The Sector of Wye had a tradition of opposition to the Entun Dynasty of Cleon I that had been ruling the Empire for over two centuries. The opposition dated back to a time when the line of Mayors of Wye had contributed members who had served as Emperor. The Wyan dynasty had neither lasted long nor had it been conspicuously successful, but the people and rulers of Wye found it difficult to forget that they had once been—however imperfectly and temporarily—supreme. The brief period when Rashelle, as Mayoress of Wye, had challenged the Empire, eighteen years earlier, had added both to Wye's pride and to its frustration.

All this made it reasonable that the small band of leading conspirators should feel as safe in Wye as they would feel anywhere on Trantor.

Five of them sat about a table in a room in a run-down portion of the sector.

The room was poorly furnished but well-shielded.

In a chair which was marginally superior in quality to the others sat the man who might well be judged by this fact to be the leader. He had a thin

Joranum, said, "There are many old Joranumites. Some are incompetent, some are soft; some have forgotten. Being an old Joranumite may mean no more than that one is an old fool."

The older man sat back in his chair. "Are you calling me an old fool? Me? I am Kaspalov—I was with JoJo when you had not yet joined the party, when you were a ragged nothing looking for a cause."

"I am not calling you a fool," said Namarti sharply. "I say simply that some old Joranumites are fools. You have a chance now to show me that you are not one of them."

"My association with JoJo—"

"Forget that. He's dead!"

"I should think his spirit lives on."

"If that thought will help us in our fight then his spirit lives on. But to others; not to us. We know he made mistakes."

"I deny that."

"Don't insist on making a hero out of a mere man who made mistakes. He thought he could move the world by the strength of oratory alone, by words—"

"History shows that words have moved mountains in the past."

"Not Joranum's words, obviously, because he made mistakes. He hid his Mycogenian origins and did it too clumsily. Worse, he let himself be tricked into accusing

the old First Minister of being a robot. I warned him against that robot accusation, but he wouldn't listen—and it destroyed him. Now let's start fresh,

shall we? Whatever use we make of Joranum's memory for the outside world, let us

not ourselves be transfixed by it."

Kaspalov sat silent. The other three transferred their gaze from Namarti to

Kaspalov and back, content to let Namarti carry the weight of the discussion.

enjoyed

hearing it used. He said, "You're part of this network and you have your duties."

Kaspalov stirred. He was clearly debating with himself internally and, finally,

he said slowly, "You tell me, Chief, that you warned Joranum against accusing

the old First Minister. You say he didn't listen, but at least you had your say.

May I have the same privilege of pointing out what I think is a mistake and have

you listen to me as Joranum listened to you, even if you, like he, don't take

the advice given you?"

"Of course you can speak your piece, Kaspalov. You are here in order that you

might do so. What is your point?"

"These new tactics of ours, Chief, are a mistake. They create disruption, and do

damage."

"Of course! They are designed to do that." Namarti stirred in his seat, controlling his anger with an effort. "Joranum tried persuasion. It didn't work.

We will bring Trantor down by action."

"For how long? And at what cost?"

"For as long as it takes, and at very little cost, actually. A power stoppage

here, a water break there, a sewage backup, an air-conditioning halt.

Inconvenience and discomfort; that's all it means."

Kaspalov shook his head. "These things are cumulative."

"Of course, Kaspalov, and we want public dismay and resentment to be cumulative,



it may in the future. And what if the people find out that we are behind it?

They would tear us apart. There would be no need to call in the police or the armed forces. Mobs would destroy us.”

“How would they ever learn enough to blame us? The natural target for the people's resentment will be the government—the Emperor's advisers. They will never look beyond that.”

“And how do we live with ourselves, knowing what we have done?”

This last was asked in a whisper, the old man clearly moved by strong emotion.

His eyes looked pleadingly across the table at his leader, the man to whom he

had sworn allegiance. He had done so in the belief that Namarti would truly

continue to bear the standard of freedom passed on by Laskin Joranum; now,

Kaspalov wondered if this was how JoJo would have wanted his dream to come to pass.

Namarti clucked his tongue, much as a reproofing parent does when confronting an errant child.

“Kaspalov, you can't seriously be turning sentimental on us, can you? Once we

are in power, we will pick up the pieces and rebuild. We will gather in the

people with all of Joranum's old talk of popular participation in government,

with greater representation, and when we are firmly in power we will establish a

know

what's going on. He hasn't the faintest notion. And his First Minister is a mathematician. He ruined Joranum, true, but since then he has done nothing."

"He has something called—called—"

"Forget it. Joranum attached a great deal of importance to it, but it was a part

of his being Mycogenian, like his robot mania. This mathematician has nothing—"

"Historical psychoanalysis, or something like that. I heard Joranum once say—"

"Forget it. Just do your part. You handle the ventilation in the Anemoria sector, don't you? Very well, then. Have it malfunction in a manner of your

choosing. It either shuts down so that the humidity rises, or it produces a peculiar odor, or something else. None of this will kill anyone, so don't get

yourself into a fever of virtuous guilt. You will simply make people uncomfortable and raise the general level of discomfort and annoyance.

Can we

depend on you?"

"But what would only be discomfort and annoyance to the young and healthy, may

be more than that to infants, the aged, and the sick."

"Are you going to insist that no one at all must be hurt?"

Kaspalov mumbled something.

Namarti said, "It's impossible to do anything with a guarantee that no one at

all will be hurt. You just do your job. Do it in such a way that you hurt as few

as possible, if your conscience insists upon it, but do it."

Kaspalov said, "Look! I have one thing more to say, Chief."

"Then say it," said Namarti wearily.

strike. But it will come. Until then will you do your part?

Kaspalov nodded his head in resignation. "Yes, Chief."

"Well, then, go," said Namarti, with a sharp gesture of dismissal.

Kaspalov rose, turned, and left. Namarti watched him go. He said to the man at

his right, "Kaspalov is not to be trusted. He has sold out and it's only so that he

can betray us that he wants to know my plans for the future. Take care of him."

The other nodded, and all three left, leaving Namarti alone in the room. He

switched off the glowing wall panels, leaving only a lonely square in the ceiling to provide the light that would keep him from being entirely in the darkness.

He thought: Every chain has weak links that must be eliminated. We have had to

do this in the past and the result is that we have an organization that is untouchable.

And in the dimness, he smiled, twisting his face into a kind of feral joy.

After

all, the network extended even into the Palace itself—not quite firmly, not

quite reliably, but it was there. And it would be strengthened.

6.

The weather was holding up over the undomed area of the Imperials Palace

grounds—warm and sunny.

It didn't often happen. Hari remembered Dors telling him once how it came about

slowly domed, the reigning Emperor, living here, liked it, and it remained undomed. And, just because it was the only area left undomed, it became special—a place apart—and that uniqueness appealed to the next Emperor, and the next, and the next ... and so, a tradition was born.”

And as always, when hearing something like that, Seldon would think: And how

would Psychohistory handle this? Would it predict that one area would remain

undomed but be absolutely unable to say which area? Could it go even so far?

Could it predict that several areas would remain undomed, or none—and be wrong?

How could it account for the personal likes and dislikes of an Emperor who

happened to be on the throne at the crucial time and who made a decision in a

moment of whimsy and nothing more? That way chaos lay—and madness.

Cleon I was clearly enjoying the good weather.

“I’m getting old, Seldon,” he said. “I don’t have to tell you that. We’re the same age, you and I. Surely it’s a sign of age when I don’t have the impulse to

play tennis, or go fishing, even though they’ve newly restocked the lake, but am

willing to walk gently over the pathways.”

He was eating nuts as he spoke, something which resembled what on Seldon’s

native world of Helicon would have been called pumpkin seeds, but which were

should be

in the Imperial presence, and his head respectfully bowed.

Cleon said, "Gardener!"

The gardener approached quickly. "Sire!"

"Get rid of these for me," and he tapped the shells into the gardener's hand.

"Yes, Sire."

Seldon said, "I have a few, too, Gruber."

Gruber held out his hand and said, almost shyly, "Yes, First Minister."

He hurried away, and the Emperor looked after him curiously. "Do you know the

fellow, Seldon?"

"Yes, indeed, Sire. An old friend."

"The gardener is an old friend? What is he? A mathematical colleague fallen on

hard times?"

"No, Sire. Perhaps you remember the story. It was the time when" (he cleared his

throat searching for the most tactful way to recall the incident) "the sergeant

threatened my life shortly after I was appointed to my present post through your

kindness."

"The assassination attempt." Cleon looked up to heaven as though seeking

patience. "I don't know why everyone is so afraid of that word."

"Perhaps," said Seldon, smoothly, slightly despising himself for the ease with

which he had come to be able to flatter, "the rest of us are more perturbed at

the possibility of something untoward happening to our Emperor than you yourself

are."

proprietary toward me. And, of course, I feel kindly toward him.

“I don't blame you. —And while we're on the subject, how is your formidable

lady, Ms. Venabili? I don't see her often.”

“She's a historian, Sire. Lost in the past.”

“She doesn't frighten you? She'd frighten me. I've been told how she treated

that sergeant. One could almost be sorry for him.”

“She grows savage on my behalf, Sire, but has not had occasion to do so lately.

It's been very quiet.”

The Emperor looked after the disappearing gardener. “Have we ever rewarded that man?”

“I have done so, Sire. He has a wife and two daughters and I have arranged that

each daughter will have a sum of money put aside for the education of any

children she may have.”

“Very good. But he needs a promotion, I think. —Is he a good gardener?”

“Excellent, Sire.”

“The Chief Gardener, Malcomber—I'm not quite sure I remember his name—is getting

on and is, perhaps, not up to the job any more. He is well into his late seventies. Do you think this Gruber might be able to take over?”

“I'm certain he can, Sire, but he likes his present job. It keeps him out in the

open in all kinds of weathers.”

“A peculiar recommendation for a job. I'm sure he can get used to administration, and I do need someone for some sort of renewal of the grounds.

They should bring these complaints to me, Sire.

“They know my soft heart, Seldon, and avoid your harshness.”

“Sire!”

“Just joking. However, that's not what I mean. How can you tell me things are

quiet when reports seem to reach me every other week of some serious breakdown

here and there on Trantor?”

“These things are bound to happen.”

“I don't recall that such things happened so frequently in previous years.”

“Perhaps that was because they didn't, Sire. The infrastructure grows older with

time. To make the necessary repairs properly would take time, labor, and

enormous expense. This is not a time when a rise in taxes will be looked on

favorably.”

“There's never any such time. I gather that the people are experiencing serious

dissatisfaction over these breakdowns. It must stop and you must see to it,

Seldon. What does Psychohistory say?”

“It says what common sense says, that everything is growing older.”

“Well, all this is quite spoiling the pleasant day for me. I leave it in your hands, Seldon.”

“Yes, Sire,” said Seldon submissively.

The Emperor strode off and Seldon thought that it was all spoiling the pleasant

day for him, too. This breakdown at the center was the alternative he didn't

want. But how was he to prevent it and switch the crisis to the Periphery?

complete  
love.

The surroundings were not as warm as they had been at Streeling in the old days, when their home had been small and intimate, and had sat like a comfortable gem in the larger setting of the university. Now, unfortunately, nothing could hide the grandeur of a Palace suite.

Raych sometimes stared at himself in the mirror and wondered how it could be. He was not tall, only 163 centimeters in height, distinctly shorter than either parent. He was rather stocky, but muscular, and not fat, with black hair and the distinctive Dahlite mustache that he kept as dark and as thick as possible.

In the mirror, he could still see the street-urchin he had once been before the chanciest of great chances had dictated his meeting with Seldon and Venabili.

Seldon had been much younger then, and his appearance now made it plain that

Raych himself was almost as old now as Seldon had been when they met.

Amazingly, his mother, Dors, had hardly changed at all. She was as sleek and fit

as the day she and Hari were accosted by young Raych and his fellow Billibotton

gang members. And he, Raych, born to poverty and misery, was now a member of the

civil service, a small cog in the Ministry of Populations.

Seldon said, "How are things going at the Ministry, Raych? Any progress?"



hearts,  
Raych. It's enough to try and perhaps eliminate the worst of the injustices."

"The trouble is," said Seldon, "that through most of history, no one's been

working on this problem. Human beings have been allowed to fester in the

delightful game of I'm-better-than-you, and cleaning up that mess isn't easy. If

we allow things to follow their own bent and grow worse for a thousand years, we

can't complain if it takes, say, one hundred years to work an improvement."

"Sometimes, Dad," said Raych, "I think you gave me this job to punish me."

Seldon's eyebrows raised. "What motivation could I have had to punish you?"

"For feeling attracted to Joranum's program of sector-equality and for greater

popular representation in government."

"I don't blame you for that. These are attractive suggestions, but you know that

Joranum and his gang were using it only as a device to gain power. Afterward—"

"But you had me entrap him despite my attraction to his views."

Seldon said, "It wasn't easy for me to ask you to do that."

"And now you keep me working at the implementation of Joranum's program, just to

show me how hard the task is in reality."

Seldon said to Venabili, "How do you like that, Dors? The boy attributes to me a

kind of sneaky underhandedness that simply isn't part of my character."

to the problem of human bigotry.

"Maybe there is, but, if so, I haven't found it."

When dinner was over, Seldon said, "You and I, Raych, are going to have a little talk now."

"Indeed?" said Venabili. "I take it I'm not invited."

"Ministerial business, Dors."

"Ministerial nonsense, Hari. You're going to ask the poor boy to do something I wouldn't want him to do."

Seldon said firmly, "I'm certainly not going to ask him to do anything he doesn't want to do."

Raych said, "It's all right, Mom. Let Dad and me have our talk. I promise I'll tell you all about it afterward."

Venabili's eyes rolled upward. "You two will plead 'state secrets.' I know it."

"As a matter of fact," said Seldon firmly. "That's exactly what I must discuss.

And of the first magnitude. I'm serious, Dors."

Venabili rose, her lips tightening. She left the room with one final injunction.

"Don't throw the boy to the wolves, Hari."

And after she was gone, Seldon said quietly, "I'm afraid that throwing you to the wolves is exactly what I'll have to do, Raych."

8.

They faced each other in Seldon's private Ministerial office, his "thinking place" as he called it. There he had spent uncounted hours trying to think his

everyone. Trantor would be much better off with only twenty billion people.”

“Which twenty billion?” asked Seldon, smiling.

“I wish I knew,” said Raych darkly. “The trouble is we can’t redo the planet, so

we just gotta keep patching.”

“I’m afraid so, Raych, but there are some peculiar things about it. Now I want

you to check me out. I have some thoughts about this.”

He brought a small sphere out of his pocket.

“What’s that?” asked Raych.

“It’s a map of Trantor, carefully programmed. Do me a favor, Raych, and clear

off this table top.”

Seldon placed the sphere more or less in the middle of the table and placed his

hand on a keypad in the arm of his desk chair. He used his thumb to close a

contact and the light in the room went out while the table top glowed with a

soft ivory light that seemed about a centimeter deep. The sphere had flattened

and expanded to the edges of the table.

The light slowly darkened in spots and took on a pattern. After some thirty

seconds, Raych said, in surprise, “It is a map of Trantor.”

“Of course. I told you it was. You can’t buy anything like this at a sector mall, though. This is one of those gadgets the armed forces play with. It could

present Trantor as a sphere, but a planar projection would more clearly show

what I want to show.”

“And what is it you want to show, Dad?”

I admit Trantor is a fairly non-seismic planet, and a good thing, too, because enclosing a world in a dome when the world is going to shake itself badly several times a year and smash a section of the dome would be highly impractical. Your mother says that one of the reasons Trantor, rather than some other world, became the Imperial capital is that it was geologically moribund—that's her unflattering expression. Still, it might be moribund, but it's not dead. There are occasional minor earthquakes, three of them in the last two years.”

“I wasn't aware of that, Dad.”

“Hardly anyone is. The dome isn't a single object. It exists in hundreds of sections, each one of which can be lifted and set ajar to relieve tensions and compressions in case of an earthquake. Since an earthquake, when one does occur, lasts for only ten seconds to a minute, the opening endures only briefly. It comes and goes so rapidly that the Trantorians beneath are not even aware of it. They are much more aware of a mild tremor, and a faint rattling of crockery, than of the opening and closing of the dome overhead and the slight intrusion of the outside weather, whatever it is.”

“That's good, isn't it?”

“It should be. It's computerized, of course. The coming of an earthquake anywhere sets off the key controls for the opening and closing of that section

Raych, are the chances that the equipment would have failed in all three cases?"

"Not high?"

"Not high at all. Less than one in a hundred. One can suppose that someone had

gimmicked the controls in advance of an earthquake. Now once a century, we have

a magma leak, which is far more difficult to control, and I'd hate to think of

the results if it went unnoticed till it was too late. Fortunately that hasn't happened, and isn't likely to, but consider— Here on this map you will find the

location of the breakdowns that have plagued us over the past two years and that

seem to be attributable to human error, though we haven't once been able to tell

to whom it might be attributed."

"That's because everyone is busy protecting his back."

"I'm afraid you're right. That's a characteristic of any bureaucracy and

Trantor's is the largest in history. —But what do you think of the locations?"

The map had lit up with bright little red markings that looked like small pustules covering the land surface of Trantor.

"Well," said Raych cautiously. "They seem to be evenly spread."

"Exactly, and that's what's interesting. One would expect that the older sections of Trantor, the sections longest domed, would have the most decayed

infrastructure and would be more liable to events requiring quick human decision

and laying the groundwork for possible human error. —I'll superimpose the older

sections of Trantor on the map in a bluish color, and you'll notice that the

it don't seem likely.

“No? Then let's look at the breakdowns as spread through time rather than through space.”

The blue areas and the red spots disappeared and, for a time, the map of Trantor was blank, and then the markings began to appear and disappear one at a time, here and there.

“Notice,” said Seldon, “that they don't appear in clumps in time, either. One appears, then another, then another, and so on, almost like the steady ticking of a metronome.”

“Do ya think that's on purpose too?”

“It must be. Whoever is bringing this about wants to cause as much disruption with as little effort as possible, so there's no use doing two at once, where

one will partially cancel the other in the news and in the public consciousness.

Each incident must stand out in full irritation.”

The map went out, the lights went on. Seldon returned the sphere, shrunken back

to its original size, to his pocket.

Raych said, “Who would be doing all this?”

Seldon said thoughtfully, “A few days ago, I received a report of a murder in

Wye sector.”

“That's not unusual,” said Raych. “Even though Wye isn't one of your really

lawless sectors, there must be lots of murders there every day.”

he died, and that was, Chief.

“That roused a certain curiosity and he was actually identified. He works in

Anemoria and what he was doing in Wye, we don't know. But then, some worthy

officer managed to dig up the fact that he was an old Joranumite. His name was

Kaspal Kaspalov, and he is well-known to have been one of the intimates of

Laskin Joranum. And now he's dead, knifed.”

Raych frowned, “Are you suspecting a Joranumite conspiracy? There aren't any

Joranumites around anymore.”

“It wasn't long ago that your mother asked me if I thought that the Joranumites

were still active, and I told her that any odd belief always retained a certain

cadre, sometimes for centuries. They're usually not very important; just splinter groups that simply don't count. Still, what if the Joranumites have

kept up an organization, what if they have retained a certain strength, what if

they are capable of killing someone they consider a traitor in their ranks, and

what if they are producing these breakdowns as a preliminary to seizing control?”

“That's an awful lot of 'if's', Dad.”

“I know that. And I might be totally wrong. The murder happened in Wye and, as

it further happens, there have been no infrastructure breakdowns in Wye.”

“What does that prove?”

“It might prove that the center of the conspiracy is in Wye and that the

so. That's not terribly surprising. After all, it's easy to lose oneself among forty billion. There was a time in my life when I tried to do just that. Of course, he may be dead. That would be the easiest explanation, but he may not be."

"What do we do about it?"

Seldon sighed. "The logical thing would be to turn to the police, to the security establishment, but I can't. I don't have Demerzel's presence. He could

cow people; I can't. He had a powerful personality; I'm just a ... mathematician. I shouldn't be in the post of First Minister; I'm not fitted for

it. And I wouldn't be, if the Emperor weren't fixated on Psychohistory to a far greater extent than it deserves."

"You're kinda whipping yourself, ain't you, Dad?"

"Yes. I suppose I am, but I have a picture of myself going to the security forces, for instance, with what I have just shown you on the map" (he pointed to

the now-empty table top) "and arguing that we are in great danger of some

conspiracy of unknown consequence and nature. They would listen solemnly and,

after I had left, they would laugh among themselves, and joke about 'the mathematician,' and they would do nothing."

"Then what do we do about it?" said Raych, returning to the point.

"It's what you will do about it, Raych. I need more evidence and I want you to

find it for me. I would send your mother, but she won't leave me under any

circumstances. I myself can't leave the Palace grounds at this time. Next to



Perhaps

you'll find out that the Joranumites are an active group—or moribund.

Perhaps

you'll find out that the Wyan ruling family is active—or not. Any of that would

be interesting, but not vital. What I want you to find out is whether the infrastructure breakdowns are of human manufacture, as I think they are, and,

far more important still, if they are deliberately caused, what else the conspirators plan to do. It seems to me they must have plans for some major

coup, and, if so, I must know what that will be.”

Raych said cautiously, “Do you have some kinda plan to get me started?”

“Yes, indeed, Raych. I want you to go down to Wye where Kaspalov was killed.

Find out if you can if he was an active Joranumite and see if you can't join a

Joranumite cell yourself.”

“Maybe that's possible. I can always pretend to be an old Joranumite. Just a kid

when JoJo was sounding off, but I was very impressed by his ideas. It's even

sorta true.”

“Well, yes, but there's one important catch. You might be recognized. After all,

you're the son of the First Minister. You have appeared on holovision now and

then, you've been an attraction for the news reports, you have been interviewed

on your views on sector equality.”

“Sure, but—”

clean as a whistle. No one would recognize you without it.

"But it can't be done. Like cutting your—like castration."

Seldon shook his head. "It's just a cultural curiosity. Yugo is as Dahlite as

you are and he wears no mustache."

"Yugo is a nut. I don't think he's alive at all except for his mathematics."

"He's a great mathematician and the absence of a mustache does not alter that

fact. Besides, it's not castration. Your mustache will grow back in two weeks."

"Two weeks! It'll take two years to reach this—this—"

He put his hand up as though to cover and protect it.

Seldon said inexorably, "Raych, you have to do it. It's a sacrifice you must

make. If you act as my spy with your mustache, you may—come to harm. I can't

take that chance."

"I'd rather die," said Raych violently.

"Don't be melodramatic," said Seldon severely. "You would not rather die, and

this is something you must do. However," and here he hesitated, "don't say

anything about it to your mother. I will take care of that."

Raych stared at his father in frustration and then said, in a low and despairing

tone, "All right, Dad."

Seldon said, "I will get someone to supervise your disguise and then you will go

to Wye by air. —Buck up, Raych, it's not the end of the world."

Raych smiled wanly, and Seldon watched him leave, a deeply troubled look on his

face. A mustache could easily be regrown, but a son could not. Seldon was

democratic spirit.

It always angered him when he was warned off a course of action by Demerzel, or, later, by Seldon, on the grounds that such action would be looked on as tyrannical or despotic.

He was not a tyrant or despot by disposition, he was certain; he only wanted to take firm and decisive action.

He spoke many times with nostalgic approval of the days when Emperors could mingle freely with their subjects, but now, of course when their history of coups and assassinations, actual or attempted, had become a dreary fact of life, the Emperor had had to be shut off from the world.

It is doubtful that Cleon, who had never in his life met with people except under the most constricted of conditions, would really have felt at home in

off-hand encounters with strangers, but he always imagined he would enjoy it. He

was grateful, therefore, for a rare chance of talking to one of the underlings

on the grounds, to smile, and to doff the trappings of Imperial rule for a few minutes. It made him feel democratic.

There was this gardener whom Seldon had spoken of, for instance. It would be

fitting, rather a pleasure, to reward him belatedly for his loyalty and bravery,

and to do so himself rather than leaving it to some functionary.

He therefore arranged to meet him in the spacious rose garden which, at this

time, was in full bloom. That would be appropriate, Cleon thought, but, of

the  
fellow's name.

He turned to one of the officials at his side, and said, "What is the gardener's name?"

"Sire, it is Mandell Gruber. He has been a gardener here for twenty-two years."

The Emperor nodded, and said, "Ah, Gruber. How glad I am to meet a worthy and hard-working gardener."

"Sire," mumbled Gruber, his teeth chattering. "I am not a man of many talents,

but it is always my best I try to do on behalf of your gracious self."

"Of course, of course," said the Emperor, wondering if the gardener suspected

him of sarcasm. These men of the lower classes lacked the finer feelings that

came with refinement and manners. It was what always made any attempt at

democratic display difficult.

Cleon said, "I have heard from my First Minister of the loyalty with which you

once came to his aid, and your skill in taking care of the grounds. The First

Minister tells me that he and you are quite friendly."

"Sire, the First Minister is most gracious to me, but I know my place. I never

speak to him unless he speaks first."

"Quite, Gruber. That shows good feeling on your part, but the First Minister,

like myself, is a man of democratic impulses, and I trust his judgment of people."

Gruber bowed low.

know that  
that is just mumbo-jumbo. He is not going to be spared, at least not with  
the

strength and wit necessary for the position. He himself requests  
retirement

within the year and I have granted him that. It remains to find a  
replacement.”

“Oh, Sire, there are fifty men and women in this grand place who could  
be Chief

Gardener.”

“I dare say,” said the Emperor, “But my choice has fallen upon you.” The  
Emperor

smiled graciously. This was the moment he had been waiting for.  
Gruber would

now, he expected, fall to his knees in an ecstasy of gratitude.

He did not, and the Emperor frowned.

Gruber said, “Sire, it is an honor that is too great for me, entirely.”

“Nonsense,” said Cleon, offended that his judgment should be called  
into

question. “It is about time that your virtues are recognized. You will no  
longer

have to be exposed to weather of all kinds at all times of the year. You  
will

have the Chief Gardener's office, a fine place, which I will have  
redecorated

for you, and where you can bring your family—You do have a family,  
don't you,

Gruber?”

“Yes, Sire. A wife, and two daughters. And a son-in-law.”

“Very good. You will be very comfortable and you will enjoy your new  
life,

Gruber. You will be indoors, Gruber, and out of the weather, like a true  
Trantorian.”

Cleon had, in a moment of testiness, declared that whenever a breakdown could be attributed to human error, the human being in question should forthwith be executed.

"A few executions," he said, "and it's remarkable how careful everyone will become."

"I'm afraid, Sire," Seldon had said, "that this would be considered despotic behavior and would not accomplish what you wish. It would probably force the workers to go on strike and if you try to force them back to work, there would then be an insurrection, and if you try to replace them with soldiers, you will find they do not know how to control the machinery, so that breakdowns will begin to take place much more frequently."

It was no wonder that Cleon turned to the matter of appointing a Chief Gardener with relief.

As for Gruber, he gazed after the departing Emperor with chill horror. He was going to be taken from the freedom of the open air and condemned to the constriction of four walls.

—Yet how could one refuse the Emperor?

it was disgusting.

Nor was he making any headway. Seldon had given him the police reports on Kaspal

Kaspalov's death, which he had studied. There wasn't much there. Just that

Kaspalov had been murdered and that the local police had come up with nothing of

importance in connection with that murder. It seemed quite clear that the police

attached little or no importance to it, anyway.

That was not surprising. In the last century, the crime rate had risen markedly

in most worlds, certainly in the grandly complex world of Trantor, and nowhere

were the local police up to the job of doing anything useful about it. In fact,

the police had declined in numbers and efficiency everywhere and (while this was

hard to prove) had become more corrupt. It was inevitable this should be so,

with pay refusing to keep pace with the cost of living. One must pay to keep

civil officials honest. Failing that, they would surely make up for inadequate

salaries in other ways

Seldon had been preaching that doctrine for some years now, but it did no good.

There was no way to increase wages without increasing taxes and the populace

would not sit still for increased taxes. It seemed they would rather lose ten

times the money in graft.

It was all part (Seldon had said) of the general deterioration of Imperial

him and  
pick him up. It was dangerous, but if he could make himself sound  
harmless

enough, they might not attack him immediately.

Well—

Raych looked at the time-strip. There would be people enjoying pre-  
dinner

aperitifs in the bar. He might as well join them, and see what would  
happen—if  
anything.

11.

In some respects, Wye could be quite puritanical. (This was true of all  
the

sections, though the rigidity of one sector might be completely different  
from

the rigidity of another.) Here, the drinks were not alcoholic, but were  
synthetically designed to stimulate in other ways. Raych did not like the  
taste,

finding himself utterly unused to it, but it meant he could sip slowly and  
have

more time to look about.

He caught the eye of a young woman several tables away and, for a  
moment, had

difficulty in looking away. She was attractive, and it was clear that Wye's  
ways

were not puritanical in every fashion.

Their eyes clung, and, after a moment, the young woman smiled slightly  
and rose.

She drifted toward Raych's table, while Raych watched her  
speculatively. He



himself  
was without his heels—something he always found attractive—had a milky complexion, and long, softly wavy hair that had distinct glints of dark red in it. Her clothing was not too garish and she might, if she had tried very hard,

have passed as a respectable woman of the not-too-hard-working class. Raych said, “My name doesn't matter. I don't have much money.”

“Oh. Too bad.” Manella made a face. “Can't you get some?”

“I'd like to. I need a job. Do you know of any?”

“What kind of job?”

Raych shrugged. “I don't have any experience in anything fancy, but I ain't proud.”

She looked at him thoughtfully. “I'll tell you what, nameless. Sometimes it doesn't take much money.”

Raych froze at once. He had been successful enough with women, but with his

mustache—his mustache. What could she see in his baby-face?

He said, “Tell you what. I had a friend living here a couple of weeks ago and I

can't find him. Since you know all the regulars, maybe you know him. His name is

Kaspalov. Kaspal Kaspalov.” He raised his voice slightly.

She stared at him blankly and shook her head. “I don't know anybody by that name.”

“Too bad. He was a Joranumite, and so am I.” Again, a blank look. “Do you know what a Joranumite is?”

ner.  
(Well, Seldon always insisted he had the capacity to inspire affection, but surely not in a business woman. For them, payment was the thing. Of course, it meant they overlooked a man being short, but a number of pleasant ordinary women didn't seem to mind.)  
His eyes followed Manella automatically as she stopped at another table, where a man was seated by himself. He was of early middle age, with butter-yellow hair, slicked back. He was very smooth-shaven, but it seemed to Raych he could have used a beard, his chin being too prominent and a bit asymmetric.  
Apparently, she had no better luck with this beardless one. A few words were exchanged, and she moved on. Too bad, but it was impossible for her to fail often, surely. She was unquestionably desirable. It was surely just a matter of financial arrangements.  
He found himself thinking, quite involuntarily, of what the upshot would be if he, after all, could—and then realized he had been joined by someone else. It was a man this time. It was, in fact, the man to whom Manella had just spoken.  
He was astonished that his own preoccupation had allowed him to be thus approached and, in effect, caught by surprise. He couldn't very well afford this sort of thing.

had meant nothing to her but it seemed to mean something to her  
“friend.”

Did that mean he was on the road now? Or merely in trouble?

12.

Raych did his best to size up his new companion, without allowing his  
own face

to lose its smooth naïvete. The man had sharp eyes and his right hand  
clenched

almost threateningly into a fist as it rested on the table.

Raych looked owlshly at the other, and waited.

Again, the man said, “I understand you call yourself a Joranumite.”

Raych did his best to look uneasy. It was not difficult. He said, “Why do  
you

ask, mister?”

“Because I don't think you're old enough.”

“I'm old enough. I used to listen to JoJo Joranum's speeches.”

“Can you quote them?”

Raych shrugged. “No, but I got the idea.”

“You're a brave young man to talk openly about being a Joranumite.  
Some people

don't like that.”

“I'm told there are lots of Joranumites in Wye.”

“That may be. Is that why you came here?”

“I'm looking for a job. Maybe another Joranumite would help me.”

“There are Joranumites in Dahl, too. Where are you from?”

There was no question that he recognized Raych's accent. That could  
not be

disguised.

He said, “I was born in Millimaru, but I lived mostly in Dahl when I was  
growing

heart think

that?"

"And you want to see the Emperorship abolished?"

Raych paused. One could get away with a great deal in the way of subversive

statements, but anything overtly anti-Emperor was stepping outside the bounds.

He said, "I ain't saying that. I believe in the Emperor, but ruling a whole Empire is too much for one man."

"It isn't one man. There's a whole Imperial bureaucracy. What do you think of

Hari Seldon, the First Minister?"

"Don't think nothing about him. Don't know about him."

"All you know is that people should be more represented in the affairs of government. Is that right?"

Raych allowed himself to look confused. "That's what JoJo Joranum used to say. I

don't know what you call it. I heard someone once call it 'democracy,' but I

don't know what that means."

"Democracy is something they have on some worlds; something they call

'democracy.' I don't know that those worlds are run better than other worlds. So

you're a democrat?"

"Is that what you call it?" Raych let his head sink as if in deep thought. "I feel more at home as a Joranumite."

"Of course, as a Dahlite—"

"I just lived there a while."

"—You're all for people's equalities and such things. The Dahlites, being an

oppressed group, would naturally think in that fashion."

"I hear that Wye is pretty strong in Joranumite thinking. They're not

Emperor.

“But you are for popular representation, aren't you? Do you think that some sort

of elected assembly could run the Galactic Empire without bogging down in

politics and partisan bickering? Without paralysis?”

Raych said, “Huh? I don't understand.”

“Do you think a great many people could come to some decision quickly in times

of emergency? Or would they just sit around and argue?”

“I don't know, but it doesn't seem right that just a few people should have all

the say over all the worlds.”

“Are you willing to fight for your beliefs? Or do you just like to talk about them?”

“No one asked me to do any fighting,” said Raych.

“Suppose someone did. How important do you think your beliefs about democracy—or

Joranumite philosophy—are?”

“I'd fight for them—if I thought it would do any good.”

“There's a brave lad. So you came to Wye to fight for your beliefs.”

“No,” said Raych, uncomfortably, “I can't say I did. I came to look for a job,

sir. It ain't easy to find no jobs these days—and I ain't got no money. A guy

gotta live.”

“I agree. What's your name?”

The question shot out without warning, but Raych was ready for it. “Planchet,

sir.”

“First or last name?”

“Only name, as far as I know.”

“You have no money and, I gather, very little education.”

but  
Raych could not read them. He looked at the other out of the corner of his eye.

“What if they think I stole it?”

“It can't be stolen. It has my sign on it, and your name.”

“What if they ask me your name?”

“They won't. —You say you want a job. There's your chance. I don't guarantee it,

but there's your chance.” He gave him another card, “This is where to go.” Raych

could read this one.

“Thank you,” he mumbled.

The man made little dismissing gestures with his hand.

Raych rose, and left—and wondered what he was getting into.

13.

Up and down. Up and down. Up and down.

Gleb Andorin watched Gambol Deen Namarti trudging up and down.

Namarti was

obviously unable to sit still under the driving force of the violence of his passion.

Andorin thought: He's not the brightest man in the Empire, or even in the

movement, not the shrewdest, certainly not the most capable of rational thought.

He has to be held down constantly—but he's driven as none of the rest of us are.

We would give up, let go, but he won't. Push, pull, prod, kick. —Well, maybe we

need someone like that. We must have someone like that or nothing will ever

harmful. The man was on the edge of being a traitor. Within a month, he would have gone running—”

“I know. I was there. I heard what he said.”

“Then you understand there was no choice. No choice. You don't think I liked to have an old comrade killed, do you? I had no choice.”

“Very well. You had no choice.”

Namarti resumed his tramping, then turned again. “Andorin, do you believe in gods?”

Andorin stared. “In what?”

“In gods.”

“I never heard the word. What is it?”

Namarti said, “It's not Galactic Standard. Supernatural influences—how's that?”

“Oh, supernatural influences. Why didn't you say so? No, I don't believe in that sort of thing. By definition, something is supernatural if it exists outside the laws of nature and nothing exists outside the laws of nature. Are you turning mystic?” Andorin asked it as though he were joking, but his eyes narrowed in sudden concern.

Namarti stared him down. Those blazing eyes of his could stare anyone down.

“Don't be a fool. I've been reading about it. Trillions of people believe in supernatural influences.”

“I know,” said Andorin. “They always have.”

“They've done so since before the beginning of history. The word ‘gods’ is of

itself a mythological concept. That's just as lunatic as the notion of supernatural influences. There never was one original human world."

"There would have to be, Andorin," said Namarti, annoyed. "Human beings can't

have evolved on different worlds and ended as a single species."

"Even so, there's no effective human world. It can't be located, it can't be

defined, so it can't be spoken of sensibly, so it effectively doesn't exist."

"These gods," said Namarti, continuing to follow his own line of thought, "are

supposed to protect humanity and keep it safe, or at least to care for those

portions of humanity that know how to make use of the gods. At a time when there

was only one human world, it makes sense to suppose they would be particularly

interested in caring for that one tiny world with a few people. They would care

for such a world as though they were big brothers, or parents."

"Very nice of them. I'd like to see them try to handle the entire Empire."

"What if they could? What if they were infinite?"

"What if the sun were frozen? What's the use of 'what if?'"

"I'm just speculating. Just thinking. Haven't you ever let your mind wander

freely? Do you always keep everything on a leash?"

"I should imagine that's the safest way, keeping it on a leash. What does your

wandering mind tell you, Chief?"

Namarti's eyes flashed at the other as though he suspected sarcasm, but

Andorin's face remained good-natured and blank.

Namarti said, "What my mind is telling me is this—if there are gods, they must



voice distinctly lower.  
Andorin interrupted. "You know, Chief, Kaspalov was not entirely wrong about this. The longer we keep it up, the greater the chance that Imperial forces will discover the cause. The whole program must, sooner or later, explode in our faces."  
"Not yet. So far, everything is exploding in the Imperial face. The unrest on Trantor is something I can feel." He raised his hands, rubbing his fingers together. "I can feel it. And we are almost through. We are ready for the next step."  
Andorin smiled humorlessly. "I'm not asking for details, Chief. Kaspalov did, and you had him eliminated. I am not Kaspalov."  
"It's precisely because you're not Kaspalov that I can tell you. And because I know something now I didn't then."  
"I presume," said Andorin, only half-believing what he was saying, "that you intend a strike on the Imperial Palace grounds themselves."  
Namarti looked up. "Of course. What else is there to do? The problem, however, is how to penetrate the grounds effectively. I have my sources of information there, but they are only spies. I'll need men of action on the spot."  
"To get men of action into the most heavily guarded region in all the galaxy will not be easy."  
"Of course not. That's what has been giving me an unbearable headache till

Do you see no significance?

Andorin thought a bit. "I am not a favorite of your gods. I don't see any significance."

"If you have a new Chief Gardener, Andorin, the situation is the same as having

a new administrator of any other type—the same as if you had a new First

Minister, or a new Emperor. The new Chief Gardener will certainly want his own

staff. He will force into retirement what he considers dead wood and will hire

younger gardeners by the hundreds."

"That's possible."

"It's more than possible. It's certain. Exactly that happened when the present

Chief Gardener was appointed, and the same when his predecessor was appointed,

and so on. Hundreds of strangers from the Outer Worlds—"

"Why from the Outer Worlds?"

"Use your brains, if you have any, Andorin. What do Trantorians know about

gardening when they've lived under domes all their lives, tending potted plants,

zoos, and carefully arranged crops of grains and fruit-trees? What do they know

about life in the wild?"

"Ahhh. Now I understand."

"So there will be these strangers flooding the grounds. They will be carefully

checked, I presume, but they won't be as tightly screened as they would be if

they were Trantorians. And that means, surely, that we should be able to supply

seems odd for me to say so, Chief, but there is something to this gods  
business  
after all, because I have been waiting to tell you something that, I now  
see,  
fits in perfectly.”

Namarti stared at the other suspiciously and looked about the room as  
though he  
suddenly feared a breach of security. But such fear was groundless.  
The room was  
located deep in an old-fashioned residential complex, and was well-  
shielded. No  
one could overhear and no one, even with detailed directions, could find  
it  
easily—nor get through the layers of protection provided by loyal  
members of the  
organization.

Namarti said, “What are you talking about?”  
“I've found a man for you. A young man—very naïve. A quite likeable  
fellow, the  
kind you feel you can trust as soon as you see him. He's got an open  
face,  
wide-open eyes; he's lived in Dahl; he's an enthusiast for equality; he  
thinks

Joranum was the greatest thing since Mycogenian candy; and I'm sure  
we can  
easily talk him into doing anything for the cause.”

“For the cause?” said Namarti, whose suspicions were not in the least  
alleviated. “Is he one of us?”

“Actually, he's not one of anything. He's got some vague notions in his  
head

that Joranum wanted Sector Equality.”  
“That was his lure. Sure.”  
“It's ours, too, but the kid believes it. He talks equality and popular

How? Does he know anything about gardening?

"No, I'm sure he doesn't. He's never worked at anything but unskilled labor.

He's operating a hauler right now, and I think that he had to be taught how to

do that. Still, if we can get him in as a gardener's helper, if he just knows how to hold a pair of shears, then we've got it."

"Got what?"

"Got someone who can approach anyone we wish, and do so without raising the

flutter of a suspicion, and get close enough to strike. I'm telling you he simply exudes a kind of honorable stupidity, a kind of foolish virtue, that inspires confidence."

"And he'll do what we tell him to do?"

"Absolutely."

"How did you meet this person?"

"It wasn't I. It was Manella who really spotted him."

"Who?"

"Manella. Manella Dubanqua."

"Oh. That friend of yours." Namarti's face twisted into a look of prissy disapproval.

"She's the friend of many people," said Andorin tolerantly. "That's one of the

things that makes her so useful. She can weigh a man quickly and with very

little to go on. She talked to this fellow, because he attracted her at sight,

and I assure you Manella is not one to be attracted by anything other than the

bottom-line, so you see this man is rather unusual. She talked to this fellow—his name is Planchet, by the way—and then told me 'I have a live one for

you, Gleb.' —I'll trust her on the matter of live ones any day."

him as a figurehead. He won't interfere with us and we'll be stronger for his existence."

Andorin's fair face turned blotchy red, and his good humor finally exploded.

"What do you have in mind, then? What are you planning? I'm getting tired of always having to second-guess."

Namarti raised his hand. "All right. All right. Calm down. I meant no harm. But

think a bit, will you? Who destroyed Joranum? Who destroyed our hopes ten years

ago? It was that mathematician. And it is he who rules the Empire now with his

idiotic talk about Psychohistory. Cleon is nothing. It is Hari Seldon we must

destroy. It is Hari Seldon whom I've been turning into an object of ridicule

with these constant breakdowns. The miseries they entail are placed at his

doorstep. It is all being interpreted as his inefficiency, his incapacity."

There was a trace of spittle in the corners of Namarti's mouth. "When he's cut

down there will be a cheer from the Empire that will drown out every holovision

report for hours. It won't even matter if they know who did it." He raised his

hand and let it drop, as if he were plunging a knife into someone's heart. "We

will be looked upon as heroes of the Empire, as saviors. —Eh? Eh? Do you think

your youngster can cut down Hari Seldon?"

14.

Manella brushed the hair out of her eyes and smiled up at Raych. “I told you it

needn't cost much in the way of money.”

Raych blinked and scratched at his bare shoulder. “Actually, it didn't cost me

nothing—unless you ask for something now.”

She shrugged and smiled rather impishly, “Why should I?”

“Why shouldn't you?”

“Because I'm allowed to take my own pleasure sometimes.”

“With me?”

“There's no one else.”

There was a long pause and then Manella said soothingly, “Besides, you don't

have much money anyway. How's the job?”

Raych said, “Ain't much, but better than nothing. Lots better. Did you tell that

guy to get me one?”

Manella shook her head slowly. “You mean Gleb Andorin? I didn't tell him to do

anything. I just said he might be interested in you.”

“Is he going to be annoyed because you and I—”

“Why should he? None of his business and none of yours if he does, either.”

“What's he do? I mean what does he work at?”

“I don't think he works at anything. He's got money. He's a relative of the old

mayors.”

“Of Wye?”

I wouldn't know.

"Don't he ever talk about that kind of stuff?"

"Not to me."

"Oh," said Raych, trying not to sound annoyed.

She looked at him shrewdly. "Why are you so interested?"

"I want to get in with them. I figure I'll get higher up that way. Better job.

More money. You know."

"Maybe Andorin will help you. He likes you. I know that much."

"Could you make him like me more?"

"I can try. I don't know why he shouldn't. I like you. I like you more than I like him."

"Thank you, Manella. I like you, too. —A lot." He ran his hand down the side of her body and wished ardently that he could concentrate more on her and less on his task.

15.

"Gleb Andorin," said Hari Seldon wearily, rubbing his eyes.

"And who is he?" asked Dors Venabili, her mood as black as it had been every day since Raych had left.

"Until a few days ago, I never heard of him," said Seldon. "That's the trouble with trying to run a world of forty billion people. You never hear of anyone except for the few who obtrude themselves on your notice. With all the computerized information in the world, Trantor remains a planet of anonymities.

We can drag up people with their serial numbers and their statistics, but whom

family, the most prominent member, in fact, so prominent that the I.G. has kept tabs on him. They think he has ambitions but is too much of a playboy to do anything about them.”

“And is he involved with the Joranumites?”

Seldon made an uncertain gesture. “I’m under the impression that the I.G. knows

nothing about the Joranumites. That means that the Joranumites don’t exist, or

that, if they do, they are of no importance. It may also mean that the I.G. just

isn’t interested. Nor is there any way in which I can force them to be interested; I’m only thankful they give me any information at all. And I am the

First Minister.”

“Is it possible that you’re not a very good First Minister?” said Venabili dryly.

“That’s more than possible. It’s been generations since there’s been one less

suited to the job than I. But that has nothing to do with the Imperial Guard.

Despite their name, they’re a totally independent arm of the government. I doubt

that Cleon himself knows much about them, though, in theory, they’re supposed to

report directly to him. Believe me, if we only knew more about the I.G. we’d be

trying to stick them into our psychohistorical equations, such as they are.”

“Are they on our side, at least?”

“I believe so, but I can’t swear to it.”

“And why are you interested in this what’s-his-name?”



proletarian movement, so to speak. And Andorin is an aristocrat of aristocrats.

What would he be doing with the Joranumites?"

"If he's of the Wyan mayoralty family, he might aspire to the Imperial throne,

might he not?"

"They've been aspiring for generations. You remember Rashelle, I trust. She was

his aunt."

"Then he might be using the Joranumites as a stepping-stone, don't you think?"

"If they exist. And if they do, and if a stepping stone is what Andorin wants, I

think he'd find himself playing a dangerous game. The Joranumites, if they

exist, would have their own plans and a man like Andorin may find he's simply

riding a greti—"

"What's a greti?"

"Some extinct animal of a ferocious type, I think. It's just a proverbial phrase, back on Helicon. If you ride a greti, you find you can't get off, for then it will eat you."

Seldon paused. "One more thing. Raych seems to be involved with a woman who

knows Andorin and through whom, he thinks, he may get important information. I'm

telling you this now so that you won't accuse me, afterward, of keeping anything

from you."

Venabili frowned. "A woman?"

"One, I gather, who knows a great many men who will talk to her unwisely,

sometimes, under intimate circumstances."

16.

Gambol Deen Namarti was not, at even the best of times, noted for his politeness

and suavity, and the approaching climax of a decade of planning had left him the

sourer of disposition.

He rose from his chair in some agitation as he said, "You've taken your time in

getting here, Andorin."

Andorin shrugged. "But I'm here now."

"And this young man of yours—this remarkable tool that you're touting.

Where is

he?"

"He'll be here eventually."

"Why not now?"

Andorin's rather handsome head seemed to sink a bit as though, for a moment, he

were lost in thought or coming to a decision, and then he said abruptly, "I

don't want to bring him till I know where I stand."

"What does that mean?"

"Simple words in Galactic Standard. How long has it been your aim to get rid of

Hari Seldon?"

"Always! Always! Is that so hard to understand? We deserve revenge for what he

did to JoJo. Even if he hadn't done that, since he's the First Minister, we'd

have to put him out of the way."

"But it's Cleon—Cleon—who must be brought down. If not only he, then at least he

Not at all. I will do the planning, take the chances, and then, when all is quite done, you gather in the reward. It makes sense, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does make sense, for the reward will be yours, too. Won't you become

the First Minister? Won't you be able to count on the full support of a new

Emperor, one who is filled with gratitude? Won't I be" (and his face twisted

with irony as he spat out the words) "the new figurehead?"

"Is that what you plan to be? A figurehead?"

"I plan to be the Emperor. I supplied money when you had none. I supplied the

cadre when you had none. I supplied the respectability you needed to build a

large organization here in Wye. I can still withdraw everything I've brought

in."

"I don't think so."

"Do you want to risk it? Don't think you can treat me as you treated Kaspalov,

either. If anything happens to me, Wye will become uninhabitable for you and

yours, and you will find that no other sector will supply you with what you

need."

Namarti sighed, "Then you insist on having the Emperor killed."

"I didn't say 'killed.' I said brought down. The details I leave to you." This last was accompanied by an almost dismissive wave of the hand, a flick

of the

wrist, as if he were already sitting on the Imperial throne.

"And then you'll be Emperor?"

"Yes."

that Cleon himself may have grown tired of him and arranged the killing. Certainly, we would see to it that rumors of this sort spread. The I.G. would hesitate and would give us a chance to put the new government into place.

Indeed, it is quite possible that they would themselves be grateful for the end

of Seldon.”

“And with the new government in place, what am I to do? Keep on waiting?

Forever?”

“No. Once I'm First Minister, there will be ways of dealing with Cleon. I may

even be able to do something with the Imperial Guard and use them as my

instruments. I will then manage to find some safe way of getting rid of Cleon,

and replacing him with you.”

Andorin burst out, “Why should you?”

Namarti said, “What do you mean, why should I?”

“You have a personal grudge against Seldon. Once he is gone, why should you run

the unnecessary risks at the highest level? You will make your peace with Cleon

and I will have to retire to my crumbling estate and my impossible dreams. And

perhaps to play it safe, you will have me killed.”

Namarti said, “No! Cleon was born to the throne. He comes from several generations of Emperors—the proud Entun dynasty. He would be very difficult to

handle, a plague. You, on the other hand, would come to the throne as a member

What good would swearing do if you couldn't trust my word? Let us say I would find you an extraordinarily useful Emperor, and I would want you to replace Cleon as soon as that can safely be managed. Now, introduce me to this man whom you think will be the perfect tool for your purposes.”

“Very well. And remember what makes him different. I have studied him. He's a not-very-bright idealist. He will do what he's told, unconcerned by danger, unconcerned by second thoughts. And he exudes a kind of trustworthiness so that his victim will trust him even if he has a blaster in his hand.”

“I find that impossible to believe.”

“Wait till you meet him,” said Andorin.

17.

Raych kept his eyes down. He had taken a quick look at Namarti and it was all he needed. He had met the man ten years before, when Raych had been sent to lure JoJo Joranum to his destruction, and one look was more than enough. Namarti had changed little in ten years. Anger and hatred were still the dominant characteristics one could see in him—or that Raych could see in him, at any rate, for he realized he was not an impartial witness—and those seemed to have marinated him into leathery permanence. His face was a trifle more gaunt;

though

the subject of conversation were not present, "This is the man, then."

Andorin nodded and his lips moved in a soundless, "Yes, Chief."

Namarti said to Raych abruptly, "Your name."

"Planchet, sir."

"You believe in our cause?"

"Yes, sir." He spoke carefully, in accordance with Andorin's instructions.

"I am

a democrat and want greater participation of the people in the governmental process."

Namarti's eyes flicked in Andorin's direction. "A speech-maker."

He looked back at Raych. "Are you willing to undertake risks for the cause?"

"Any risk, sir."

"You will do as you are told? No questions? No hanging back?"

"I will follow orders."

"Do you know anything about gardening?"

Raych hesitated. "No, sir."

"You're a Trantorian, then? Born under the dome?"

"I was born in Millimaru, sir, and I was brought up in Dahl."

"Very well," said Namarti. Then, to Andorin. "Take him out and deliver him,

temporarily, to the men waiting there. They will take good care of him.

Then

come back, Andorin, I want to speak to you."

When Andorin returned, a profound change had come over Namarti. His eyes were

glittering and his mouth was twisted into a feral grin.

"Andorin," he said, "the gods we spoke of the other day are with us to an extent

I couldn't have imagined."

"I told you the man was suitable for our purposes."

suppose that ten years' passage, and false needs, and a shaved mustache could fool me? That Planchet of yours is Raych, the foster-son of Hari Seldon."

Andorin paled and, for a moment, he held his breath. He said, "Are you sure of that, Chief?"

"As sure as I am that you're standing here in front of me and that you have introduced an enemy into our midst."

"I had no idea—"

"Don't get nervous," said Namarti. "I consider it the best thing you have ever

done in your idle, aristocratic life. You have played the role that the gods have marked out for you. If I had not known who he was, he might have fulfilled

the function for which he was undoubtedly intended, to be a spy in our midst and

an informant of our most secret plans. But since I know who he is, it won't work

that way. Instead, we now have everything." Namarti rubbed his hands together in

delight and, haltingly, as if he realized how far out of character for him it was, he smiled—and laughed.

18.

Manella said thoughtfully, "I guess I won't be seeing you anymore, Planchet."

Raych was drying himself after his shower. "Why not?"

"Gleb Andorin doesn't want me to."

"Why not?"

I know," said Raych, who was himself careful not to. "What else does he say?"

"Why do you ask?" She frowned a bit. "He always asks about you, too. I noticed

that about men. They're curious about each other. Why is that, do you suppose?"

"What do you tell him about me?"

"Not much. Just you're a nice kid and you're a very decent sort. Naturally, I

don't tell him I like you better than I like him. That would hurt his feelings—and it might hurt me, too."

Raych was getting dressed. "So it's good-bye, then."

"For a while, I suppose. Gleb may change his mind. Of course, I'd like to go to

the Imperial sector, if he'd take me. I've never been there."

Raych almost slipped, but he managed to cough, then said, "I've never been

there, either."

"It's got the biggest buildings and the nicest places and the fanciest restaurants, and that's where the rich people live. I'd like to meet some

rich

people."

Raych said, "I suppose there's not much to be gotten out of a person like me."

"You're all right. You can't think of money all the time, but, by the same token, you've got to think of it some of the time. Especially since I think

Gleb

is getting tired of me."

Raych felt compelled to say, "No one could get tired of you," and then found, a

little to his own confusion, that he meant it.

Manella said, "That's what men always say, but you'd be surprised. Anyway, it's



question  
about gardening.  
Nor could he get any further information back to Seldon. He had been kept under close scrutiny since his meeting with Namarti; and all avenues of communication were cut off—surely another indication of an approaching crisis. But if he were to find out what was going on only after it was done, and if he could communicate the news only after it was no longer news, he would have failed.

19.  
Hari Seldon was not having a good day. He had not heard from Raych since his first communiqué; he had no idea what was happening. Aside from his natural concern for Raych's safety (surely he would hear if something really bad had happened) there was his uneasiness over what might be planned. It would have to be subtle. A direct attack on the Palace itself was totally out of the question. Security there was far too tight. But if so, what else could be planned that would be sufficiently effective? The whole thing was keeping him awake at night and distracted by day. The signal-light flashed.  
“First Minister. Your two o'clock appointment, sir—”  
“What two o'clock appointment is this?”

that. Seldon was quite certain the gardener had never been in any room  
as  
magnificent as this one, and he had the bitter urge to say: Do you like it?  
Please take it. I don't want it.  
But he only said, "What is it, Gruber? Why are you so unhappy?"  
There was no immediate answer; Gruber merely smiled vacantly.  
Seldon said, "Sit down, man. Right there in that chair."  
"Oh, no, First Minister. It would not be fitting. I'll get it dirty."  
"If you do, it will be easy to clean. Do as I say. —Good! Now just sit  
there a  
minute or two and gather your thoughts. Then, when you are ready, tell  
me what's  
the matter."  
Gruber sat silent for a moment, then the words came out in a panting  
rush.  
"First Minister. It is Chief Gardener I am to be. The blessed Emperor  
himself  
told me so."  
"Yes, I have heard of that, but that surely isn't what is troubling you.  
Your  
new post is a matter of congratulations and I do congratulate you. I may  
even  
have contributed to it, Gruber. I have never forgotten your bravery at the  
time  
they tried to kill me, and you can be sure I mentioned it to His Imperial  
Majesty. It is a suitable reward, Gruber, and you would deserve the  
promotion in  
any case for it is quite clear from your record that you are fully qualified  
for  
the post. So now that that's out of the way, tell me what is troubling  
you."  
"First Minister, it is the very post and promotion that is troubling me. It is  
something I cannot manage for I am not qualified."

I want the hard work, First Minister, and it's no chance at all they will let me come out of the office. I have watched the present Chief Gardener. He couldn't leave his office, though he wanted to ever so. There is too much administration, too much bookkeeping. Sure, if he wants to know what is going on, we must go to his office to tell him. He watches things on holovision" (this, with infinite contempt) "as though you can tell anything about growing, living things from images. It is not for me, First Minister."

"Come, Gruber, be a man. It's not all that bad. You'll get used to it. You'll work your way in slowly."

Gruber shook his head. "First off—at the very first—I will have to deal with the new gardeners. I'll be buried." Then, with sudden energy, "It is a job I do not want and must not have, First Minister."

"Right now, Gruber, perhaps you don't want the job, but you are not alone. I'll tell you that right now I wish I were not First Minister. This job is too much for me. I even have a notion that there are times when the Emperor himself is tired of his Imperial robes. We're all in this galaxy to do our work, and the work isn't always pleasant."

"I understand that, First Minister, but the Emperor must be Emperor, for he was born to that. And you must be First Minister for there is no one else who can do the job. But in my case, it is just Chief Gardener we are ruminating upon. There

that you will understand it. The Emperor, in theory, is absolute ruler of the Empire. In actual fact, there is very little he can do. I run the Empire. I run the Empire right now much more than he does and there is very little I can do, too. There are millions and billions of people at all levels of government, all making decisions, all making mistakes, some acting wisely and heroically, some acting foolishly and thievishly. There's no controlling them. Do you understand me, Gruber?"

"I do, but what has this to do with my case?"

"Because there is only one place where the Emperor is really absolute ruler, and

that is over the Imperial grounds themselves. Here his word is law and the layers of officials beneath him are few enough for him to handle. For him to be

asked to rescind a decision he has made in connection with the Imperial Palace

grounds would be to invade the only area which he would consider inviolate. If I

were to say, 'Take back your decision on Gruber, Your Imperial Majesty' he would

be much more likely to relieve me of my duties than to take back his decision.

That might be a good thing for me, but it wouldn't help you any."

Gruber said, "Does that mean there's no way things can be changed?"

"That's exactly what it means. But don't worry, Gruber, I'll help you all I can.

by a quadrillion and you would have the woes of all the people of the twenty-five million worlds of the Empire, and how was he, Seldon, to work out

salvation for all of them, when he was helpless to solve the problem of one

single man who had come to him for help?

Psychohistory could not save one man. Could it save a quadrillion?

He shook his head again, and checked the nature and time of his next appointment, and then, suddenly, he stiffened. He shouted into his communications wire in sudden wild abandon, quite unlike his usually strict

control. "Get that gardener back. Get him back right now."

20.

"What's this about new gardeners?" exclaimed Seldon. This time, he did not ask

Gruber to sit down.

Gruber's eyes blinked rapidly. He was in a panic at having been recalled so

unexpectedly. "New gardeners?" he stammered.

"You said 'all the new gardeners.' Those were your words. What new gardeners?"

Gruber was astonished. "Sure, if there is a new Chief Gardener, there will be

new gardeners. It is the custom."

"I have never heard of this."

"The last time we had a change of Chief Gardeners, you were not First Minister.

It is likely you were not even on Trantor."

"But what's it all about?"

are almost five hundred square kilometers in the gardens and parklands, and it usually takes some years to reorganize it, and it is myself who will have to supervise it all.

Please, First Minister," Gruber was gasping. "Surely, a clever man like your own

self can find a way to change the blessed Emperor's mind."

Seldon paid no attention. His forehead was creased in concentration.

"Where do the new gardeners come from?"

"There are examinations on all the worlds—there are always people waiting to

serve as replacements. They'll be coming in by the hundreds in a dozen batches.

It will take me a year, at the least—"

"From where do they come? From where?"

"From any of a million worlds. We want a variety of horticultural knowledge. Any

citizen of the Empire can qualify."

"From Trantor, too?"

"No, not from Trantor. There is no one from Trantor in the gardens." His voice

grew contemptuous. "You can't get a gardener out of Trantor. The parks they have

here under the dome aren't gardens. They are potted plants, and the animals are

in cages. Trantorians, poor specimens that they are, know nothing about open

air, free water, and the true balance of nature."

"All right, Gruber. I will now give you a job. It will be up to you to get me the names of every new gardener scheduled to arrive over the coming weeks.

Everything about them. Name. World. Identification number. Education.

if I should do this—

“Gruber, this is not the time to make bargains. Fail me, and you will not be

Chief Gardener. Instead, you will be discharged without a pension.”

Alone again, he barked into his communications wire, “Cancel all appointments

for the rest of the afternoon.”

He then let his body flop in his chair, feeling every bit of his fifty years, and more, feeling his headache worsen. For years, for decades, security had been

built about the Imperial Palace grounds, thicker, more solid, more impenetrable,

as each new layer and each new device was added.

—And every once in a while, hordes of strangers were let into the grounds. No

questions asked, probably, but one: Can you garden?

The stupidity involved was too colossal to grasp.

And he had barely caught it in time. Or had he? Was he, even now, too late?

21.

Gleb Andorin gazed at Namarti through half-closed eyes. He had never liked the

man, but there were times when he liked him less than he usually did, and this

was one of those times. Why should Andorin, a Wyan of royal birth (that's what

it amounted to, after all), have to work with this parvenu, this near-psychotic

paranoid?

though it were a matter of rote, —so year after year, I worked on those lines,  
even through hopelessness and uselessness, building an organization,  
chipping  
away at confidence in the government, creating and intensifying  
dissatisfaction.

When there was the banking crisis and the week of the moratorium, I—”  
He paused suddenly. “I’ve told you this many times, and you’re sick of  
hearing  
it, aren’t you?”

Andorin’s lips twitched in a brief, dry smile. Namarti was not such an  
idiot as

not to know the bore he was; he just couldn’t help it. Andorin said,  
“You’ve

told me this many times.” He allowed the remainder of the question to  
hang in

the air unanswered. The answer, after all, was an obvious affirmative.  
There was

no need to face him with it.  
A slight flush crossed Namarti’s sallow face. He said, “But it could have  
gone

on forever, the building, the chipping, without ever coming to a point, if I  
hadn’t had the proper tool in my hands. And without any effort on my  
part, the

tool came to me.”  
“The gods brought you Planchet,” said Andorin neutrally.

“You’re right. There will be a group of gardeners entering the Imperial  
Palace

grounds soon.” He paused and seemed to savor the thought. “Men and  
women. Enough

to serve as a mask for the handful of our operatives who will accompany  
them.



task—the Third Assistant Chamberlain in Charge of Grass and Leaves,  
for all I  
know, but in this case, it will be Seldon himself. The great  
mathematician will  
hurry out to greet the new gardeners and welcome them to the  
grounds.”  
“You're sure of that, I suppose.”  
“Of course I am. It's all been arranged. He will learn, at more or less the  
last  
minute, that his son is among those listed as new gardeners, and it will  
be  
impossible for him to refrain from coming out to see him. And when  
Seldon  
appears, Planchet will raise his blaster. Our people will raise the cry of  
'Treason.' In the confusion and hurly-burly, Planchet will kill Seldon, and  
you  
will kill Planchet. You will then drop your blaster and leave. There are  
those  
who will help you leave. It's been arranged.”  
“Is it absolutely necessary to kill Planchet?”  
Namarti frowned. “Why? Do you object to one killing and not to another?  
When  
Planchet recovers, do you wish him to tell the authorities all he knows  
about  
us? Besides, this is a family feud we are arranging. Don't forget that  
Planchet  
is, in actual fact, Raych Seldon. It will look as though the two had fired  
simultaneously at each other, or as though Seldon had given orders that  
if his  
son made any hostile move, he was to be shot down. We will see to it  
that the  
family angle will be given full publicity. It will be reminiscent of the bad  
old

some interim government, but it will fail. We'll see to it that it fails, and we'll come out in the open and revive the old Joranumite arguments that the

Trantorians have never forgotten. And in time, in not too much time, I will be

First Minister.”

“And I?”

“Will eventually be the Emperor.”

Andorin said, “The chance of all this working is small. —This is arranged. That

is arranged. The other thing is arranged. All of it has to come together and

mesh perfectly, or it will fail. Somewhere, someone is bound to mess up. It's an

unacceptable risk.”

“Unacceptable? For whom? For you?”

“Certainly. You expect me to make certain that Planchet will kill his father and

you expect me then to kill Planchet. Why me? Aren't there tools worth less than

I who might more easily be risked?”

“Yes, but to choose anyone else would make failure certain. Who but you has so

much riding on this mission that there is no chance you will turn back in a fit

of vapors at the last minute?”

“The risk is enormous.”

“Isn't it worth it to you? You're playing for the Imperial throne.”

“And what risk are you taking, Chief? You will remain here, quite comfortable,

and wait to hear the news.”

Namarti's lip curled. “What a fool you are, Andorin! What an Emperor you will

And when they do find me, what do you suppose I will have to face at their hands? —Risk? I run a worse risk than any of you, just sitting here doing nothing. It boils down to this, Andorin. Do you, or do you not, wish to be Emperor?" Andorin said in a low voice, "I wish to be Emperor." And so things were set in motion.

22.

Raych had no trouble seeing that he was being treated with special care. The whole group of would-be gardeners were now quartered in one of the hotels in the Imperial Sector, although not one of the prime hotels, of course. They were an odd lot, from fifty different worlds, but Raych had little chance to speak to any of them. Andorin, without being too obvious about it, kept him apart from the others. Raych wondered why. It depressed him. In fact, he had been feeling somewhat depressed since he had left Wye. It interfered with his thinking process and he fought it, but not with entire success. Andorin was himself wearing rough clothes and was attempting to look like a workman. He would be playing the part of a gardener as a way of running the show—whatever the show might be.

monopolized him, insisted on having all his meals with him, treated him quite differently from the way in which he treated anyone else.

Could it be because they had shared Manella? Raych did not know enough about the mores of the Sector of Wye to be able to tell whether there might not be a polyandrich touch to their society. If two men shared a woman, did that make them in a way fraternal? Did it create a bond?

Raych had never heard of such a thing, but he knew better than to suppose he had a grasp of even a tiny fraction of the infinite subtleties of galactic societies, even of Trantorian societies.

But now that his mind had brought him back to Manella, he dwelled on her for a while. He missed her terribly, and it occurred to him that that might be the cause of his depression, though, to tell the truth, what he was feeling now, as he was finishing lunch with Andorin, was almost despair—though he could think of no cause for it.

Manella!

She had said she wanted to visit the Imperial Sector and, presumably, she could wheedle Andorin to her liking. He was desperate enough to ask a foolish question. “Mr. Andorin, I keep wondering if maybe you brought Ms. Dubanqua along with you, here to the Imperial Sector.”

Andorin looked utterly astonished. Then he laughed gently. “Manella? Do you see

there

will be other women. Plenty of them.”

“When will this be over?”

“Soon. And you're going to be part of it in a very important way.” Andorin watched Raych narrowly.

Raych said, “How important? Aren't I gonna be just—a gardener?” His voice

sounded hollow, and he found himself unable to put a spark in it.

“You'll be more than that, Planchet. You'll be going in with a blaster.”

“With a what?”

“A blaster.”

“I never held a blaster. Not in my whole life.”

“There's nothing to it. You lift it. You point it. You close the contact, and someone dies.”

“I can't kill anyone.”

“I thought you were one of us; that you would do anything for the cause.”

“I didn't mean—kill.” Raych couldn't seem to collect his thoughts. Why must he

kill? What did they really have in mind for him? And how would he be able to

alert the Palace guards before the killing would be carried out?

Andorin's face hardened suddenly; an instant conversion from friendly interest

to stern decision. He said, “You must kill.”

Raych gathered all his strength. “No. I ain't gonna kill nobody. That's final.”

Andorin said, “Planchet, you will do as you are told.”

“Not murder.”

“Even murder.”

“How you gonna make me?”

“I shall simply tell you to.”

Raych felt dizzy. What made Andorin so confident?

Raych knew about desperance. It was a chemical modification of a perfectly harmless tranquilizer. The modified form, however, did not produce tranquillity, but despair. It had been outlawed because of its use in mind control, though there were persistent rumors that the Imperial Guard used it. Andorin said, as though it were not hard to read Raych's mind, "It's called desperance because that's an old word meaning 'hopelessness.' I think you're feeling hopeless." "Never," whispered Raych. "Very resolute of you, but you can't fight the chemical. And the more hopeless you feel, the more effective the drug." "No chance." "Think about it, Planchet. Namarti recognized you at once, even without your mustache. He knows you are Raych Seldon, and, at my direction, you are going to kill your father." Raych muttered, "Not before I kill you." He rose from his chair. There should be no problem at all in this. Andorin might be taller, but he was slender and, clearly, no athlete. Raych would break him in two with one arm—but he swayed as he rose. He shook his head, but it wouldn't clear. Andorin rose, too, and backed away. He drew his right hand from where it had been resting within his left sleeve. He was holding a weapon.

it.  
Raych, who had been advancing slowly and grimly, stopped abruptly.  
He had been  
twelve years old when he had had a taste—a small one—of a neuroniac  
whip. Once  
struck, no one ever forgot the pain, however long he lived, however full  
of  
incidents his life.  
Andorin said, “Moreover, I will use full strength so that the nerves in your  
upper arms will be stimulated first into unbearable pain and then  
damaged into  
uselessness. You will never use your left arm again. I will spare the right  
so  
you can handle the blaster. —Now if you sit down and accept matters,  
as you  
must, you may keep both arms. Of course, you must eat again so your  
desperance  
level increases. Your situation will only worsen.”  
Raych felt the drug-induced despair settle over him, and the despair  
served, in  
itself, to deepen the effect. His vision was turning double, and he could  
think  
of nothing to say.  
He knew only that he would have to do what Andorin would tell him to  
do. He had  
played the game, and he had lost.

23.

“No!” Hari Seldon was almost violent. “I don’t want you out there, Dors.”  
Venabili stared back at him, with an expression as firm as his own.  
“Then I

the names of every one of them.

“Have them taken into custody, then. Every last one of them. It's simple.

Why

are you making it so complex?”

“Because we don't know why they're here. Something's up. I don't see what twelve

gardeners can do, but— No, let me rephrase that. I can see a dozen things they

can do, but I don't know which one of those things they plan. We will indeed

take them into custody, but I must know more about everything before it's done.

“We have to know enough to winkle out everyone in the conspiracy from top to

bottom, and we must know enough of what they're doing to be able to make the

proper punishment stick. I don't want to get twelve men and women on what is

essentially a misdemeanor charge. They'll plead desperation; the need for a job.

They'll complain it isn't fair for Trantorians to be excluded. They'll get plenty of sympathy and we'll be left looking like fools. We must give them a

chance to convict themselves of more than that. Besides—”

There was a long pause and Venabili said wrathfully, “Well, what's the new

‘besides’?”

Seldon's voice lowered. “One of the twelve is Raych, using the alias Planchet.”

“What?”

“Why are you surprised? I sent him to Wye to infiltrate the Joranumite movement



evidence. The gardeners in question must think they have a clear hand to do whatever it is they plan to do. Before they can do so, but after they have made it quite plain what they intend—we'll have them.”

“That's risky. It's risky for Raych.”

“Risks are something we have to take. There's more riding on this than individual lives.”

“That is a heartless thing to say.”

“You think I have no heart? Even if it broke, my concern would have to be with Psycho—”

“Don't say it.” She turned away as if in pain.

“I understand,” said Seldon, “but you mustn't be there. Your presence would be so inappropriate that the conspirators will suspect we know too much and will abort their plan. I don't want their plan aborted.”

He paused, then said softly, “Dors, you say your job is to protect me. That comes before protecting Raych and you know that. I wouldn't insist on it, but to protect me is to protect Psychohistory and the entire human species. That must come first. What I have of Psychohistory tells me that I, in turn, must protect the center at all costs, and that is what I am trying to do. —Do you understand?”

Venabili said, “I understand,” and turned away from him.

Seldon thought: And I hope I'm right.

If he weren't, she would never forgive him. Far worse, he would never forgive himself. Psychohistory or not.

but then,  
gardeners were supposed to clip their hair quite short, either sex, and there

could be no facial hair.

Why that should be, one couldn't say. The word "tradition" covered it all, as it

covered so many things, some useful, some foolish.

Facing them was Mandell Gruber, flanked on either side by a deputy. Gruber was

trembling, his wide-open eyes glazed.

Hari Seldon's lips tightened. If Gruber could but manage to say, "The Emperor's

Gardeners greet you all," that would be enough. Seldon himself would then take

over.

His eyes swept over the new contingent and he located Raych.

His heart jumped a bit. It was the mustacheless Raych in the front row, standing

more rigid than the rest, staring straight ahead. His eyes did not move to meet

Seldon's; he showed no sign of recognition, however subtle.

Good, thought Seldon. He's not supposed to. He's giving nothing away.

Gruber muttered a weak welcome and Seldon jumped in.

He advanced with an easy stride, putting himself immediately before Gruber and

said, "Thank you, Acting First Gardener. Men and women, Gardeners of the

Emperor, you are to undertake an important task. You will be responsible for the

beauty and health of the only open land on our great world of Trantor, capital

of the Galactic Empire. You will see to it that if we don't have the endless

home, which  
is the building you see to the right—the one with the opal-layered dome—and that

he is pleased with what he sees.

“Before you start work, of course, you will all undertake a course of training

that will make you entirely familiar with the grounds and their needs.

You

will—”

He had by this time, moved, almost stealthily, to a point directly in front of

Raych, who still remained motionless, unblinking.

Seldon tried not to look unnaturally benign and then a slight frown crossed his

face. The person directly behind Raych looked familiar. He might have gone

unrecognized if Seldon had not studied his hologram. Wasn't that Gleb Andorin of

Wye? Raych's patron in Wye, in fact? What was he doing here?

Andorin must have noticed Seldon's sudden regard, for he muttered something

between scarcely opened lips and Raych's right arm, moving forward from behind

his back, plucked a blaster out of the wide pocket of his green doublet. So did

Andorin.

Seldon felt himself going into near-shock. How could blasters have been allowed

onto the grounds? Confused, he barely heard the cries of “Treason” and the

sudden noise of running and shouting.

All that really occupied Seldon's mind was Raych's blaster pointing directly at

it vaporizes and blows out an interior and, if anything, causes an implosion.

There is a soft, sighing sound, leaving what appears to be a “blasted” object.

Hari Seldon did not expect to hear that sound. He expected only death. It was,

therefore, with surprise that he heard the distinctive soft, sighing sound, and

he blinked rapidly as he looked down at himself, slack-jawed.

He was alive? (He thought it as a question, not a statement.)

Raych was still standing there, his blaster pointing forward, his eyes glazed.

He was absolutely motionless as though some motive power had ceased.

Behind him was the crumpled body of Andorin, fallen in a pool of blood, and

standing next to him, blaster in hand, was a gardener. The hood had slipped

away; the gardener was clearly a woman with freshly clipped hair.

She allowed herself a glance at Seldon and said, “Your son knows me as Manella

Dubanqua. I'm Imperial Guard. Do you want my identification, First Minister?”

“No,” said Seldon faintly. Security personnel had converged on the scene. “My

son! What's wrong with my son?”

“Desperance, I think,” said Manella. “That can be washed out eventually.” She

reached forward to take the blaster out of Raych's hand. “I'm sorry I didn't act

sooner. I had to wait for an overt move and, when it came, it almost caught me

napping.”

grow any  
angrier over that.

And there, with an appalled group watching in stupor—there, on the semi-circular

stairway, was the body of His Imperial Majesty, Cleon I, smashed all but beyond

recognition. His rich Imperial robes now served as a shroud. Cowering against

the wall, staring stupidly at the horrified faces surrounding him, was Mandell

Gruber.

Seldon felt he could take no more. He took in the blaster lying at Gruber's

feet. It had been Andorin's, he was sure. He asked softly, "Gruber, what have

you done?"

Gruber, staring at him, babbled, "Everyone screaming and yelling. I thought, who

would know? They would think someone else had killed the Emperor. But then I

couldn't run."

"But Gruber. Why?"

"So I wouldn't have to be First Gardener." And he collapsed.

Seldon stared in shock at the unconscious Gruber.

Everything had worked out by the narrowest of margins. He himself was alive.

Raych was alive. Andorin was dead and the Joranumite conspiracy would now be

hunted down to the last person.

The center would have held, just as Psychohistory had dictated.

And then one man, for a reason so trivial as to defy analysis, had killed the

Emperor.

