

FOUNDATION AND EMPIRE

ISAAC ASIMOV

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THE STORY BEHIND THE “FOUNDATION”

By ISAAC ASIMOV

The date was August 1, 1941. World War II had been raging for two years. France had fallen, the Battle of Britain had been fought, and the Soviet Union had just been invaded by Nazi Germany. The bombing of Pearl Harbor was four months in the future.

But on that day, with Europe in flames, and the evil shadow of Adolf Hitler apparently falling over all the world, what was chiefly on my mind was a meeting toward which I was hastening.

I was 21 years old, a graduate student in chemistry at Columbia University, and I had been writing science fiction professionally for three years. In that time, I had sold five stories to John Campbell, editor of *Astounding*, and the fifth story, “Nightfall,” was about to appear in the September 1941 issue of the magazine. I had an appointment to see Mr. Campbell to tell him the plot of a new story I was planning to write, and the catch was that I had no plot in mind, not the trace of one.

I therefore tried a device I sometimes use. I opened a book at random and set up free association, beginning with whatever I first saw. The book I had with me was a collection of the Gilbert and Sullivan plays. I happened to open it to the picture of the Fairy Queen of *Iolanthe* throwing herself at the feet of

Private Willis. I thought of soldiers, of military empires, of the Roman Empire - of a Galactic Empire - aha!

Why shouldn't I write of the fall of the Galactic Empire and of the return of feudalism, written from the viewpoint of someone in the secure days of the Second Galactic Empire? After all, I had read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* not once, but twice.

I was bubbling over by the time I got to Campbell's, and my enthusiasm must have been catching for Campbell blazed up as I had never seen him do. In the course of an hour we built up the notion of a vast series of connected stories that were to deal in intricate detail with the thousand-year period between the First and Second Galactic Empires. This was to be illuminated by the science of psychohistory, which Campbell and I thrashed out between us.

On August 11, 1941, therefore, I began the story of that interregnum and called it "Foundation." In it, I described how the psychohistorian, Hari Seldon, established a pair of Foundations at opposite ends of the Universe under such circumstances as to make sure that the forces of history would bring about the second Empire after one thousand years instead of the thirty thousand that would be required otherwise.

The story was submitted on September 8 and, to make sure that Campbell really meant what he said about a series, I ended "Foundation" on a cliff-hanger. Thus, it seemed to me, he would be *forced* to buy a second story.

However, when I started the second story (on October 24), I found that I had outsmarted myself. I quickly wrote myself into an impasse, and the Foundation series would have died an ignominious death had I not had a conversation with Fred Pohl on November 2 (on the Brooklyn Bridge, as it happened). I don't remember what Fred actually said, but, whatever it was, it pulled me out of the hole.

"Foundation" appeared in the May 1942 issue of *Astounding* and the succeeding story, "Bridle and Saddle," in the June 1942 issue.

After that there was only the routine trouble of writing the stories. Through the remainder of the decade, John Campbell kept my nose to the grindstone and made sure he got additional Foundation stories.

"The Big and the Little" was in the August 1944 *Astounding*, "The Wedge" in the October 1944 issue, and "Dead Hand" in the April 1945 issue. (These stories were written while I was working at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia.)

On January 26, 1945, I began "The Mule," my personal favorite among the Foundation stories, and the longest yet, for it was 50,000 words. It was printed as a two-part serial (the very first serial I was ever responsible for) in the November and December 1945 issues. By the time the second part appeared I was in the army.

After I got out of the army, I wrote "Now You See It-" which appeared in the January 1948 issue. By this time, though, I had grown tired of the Foundation stories so I tried to end them by setting up, and solving, the mystery of the location of the Second Foundation. Campbell would have none of that, however. He forced me to change the ending, and made me promise I would do one more Foundation story.

Well, Campbell was the kind of editor who could not be denied, so I wrote one more Foundation story, vowing to myself that it would be the last. I called it "-And Now You Don't," and it appeared as a three-part serial in the November 1949, December 1949, and January 1950 issues of *Astounding*.

By then, I was on the biochemistry faculty of Boston University School of Medicine, my first book had just been published, and I was determined to move on to new things. I had spent eight years on the Foundation, written nine stories with a total of about 220,000 words. My total earnings for the series came to \$3,641 and that seemed enough. The Foundation was over and done with, as far as I was concerned.

In 1950, however, hardcover science fiction was just coming into existence. I had no objection to earning a little more money by having the Foundation series reprinted in book form. I offered the series to Doubleday (which had already published a science-fiction novel by me, and which had contracted for another) and to Little-Brown, but both rejected it. In that year, though, a small publishing firm, Gnome Press, was beginning to be active, and it was prepared to do the Foundation series as three books.

The publisher of Gnome felt, however, that the series began too abruptly. He persuaded me to write a small Foundation story, one that would serve as an introductory section to the first book (so that the first part of the Foundation series was the last written).

In 1951, the Gnome Press edition of *Foundation* was published, containing the introduction and the first four stories of the series. In 1952, *Foundation and Empire* appeared, with the fifth and sixth stories; and in 1953, *Second Foundation* appeared, with the seventh and eighth stories. The three books together came to be called *The Foundation Trilogy*.

The mere fact of the existence of the *Trilogy* pleased me, but Gnome Press did not have the

financial clout or the publishing knowhow to get the books distributed properly, so that few copies were sold and fewer still paid me royalties. (Nowadays, copies of first editions of those Gnome Press books sell at \$50 a copy and up-but I still get no royalties from them.)

Ace Books did put out paperback editions of *Foundation* and of *Foundation and Empire*, but they changed the titles, and used cut versions. Any money that was involved was paid to Gnome Press and I didn't see much of that. In the first decade of the existence of *The Foundation Trilogy* it may have earned something like \$1500 total.

And yet there was some foreign interest. In early 1961, Timothy Seldes, who was then my editor at Doubleday, told me that Doubleday had received a request for the Portuguese rights for the Foundation series and, since they weren't Doubleday books, he was passing them on to me. I sighed and said, "The heck with it, Tim. I don't get royalties on those books."

Seldes was horrified, and instantly set about getting the books away from Gnome Press so that Doubleday could publish them instead. He paid no attention to my loudly expressed fears that Doubleday "would lose its shirt on them." In August 1961 an agreement was reached and the Foundation books became Doubleday property. What's more, Avon Books, which had published a paperback version of *Second Foundation*, set about obtaining the rights to all three from Doubleday, and put out nice editions.

From that moment on, the Foundation books took off and began to earn increasing royalties. They have sold well and steadily, both in hardcover and softcover, for two decades so far. Increasingly, the letters I received from the readers spoke of them in high praise. They received more attention than all my other books put together.

Doubleday also published an omnibus volume, *The Foundation Trilogy*, for its Science Fiction Book Club. That omnibus volume has been continuously featured by the Book Club for over twenty years.

Matters reached a climax in 1966. The fans organizing the World Science Fiction Convention for that year (to be held in Cleveland) decided to award a Hugo for the best all-time series, where the series, to qualify, had to consist of at least three connected novels. It was the first time such a category had been set up, nor has it been repeated since. The Foundation series was nominated, and I felt that was going to have to be glory enough for me, since I was sure that Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" would win.

It didn't. The Foundation series won, and the Hugo I received for it has been sitting on my bookcase in the livingroom ever since.

In among all this litany of success, both in money and in fame, there was one annoying side-effect. Readers couldn't help but notice that the books of the Foundation series covered only three hundred-plus years of the thousand-year hiatus between Empires. That meant the Foundation series "wasn't finished." I got innumerable letters from readers who asked me to finish it, from others who demanded I finish it, and still others who threatened dire vengeance if I didn't finish it. Worse yet, various editors at Doubleday over the years have pointed out that it might be wise to finish it.

It was flattering, of course, but irritating as well. Years had passed, then decades. Back in the 1940s, I had been in a Foundation-writing mood. Now I wasn't. Starting in the late 1950s, I had been in a more and more nonfiction-writing mood.

That didn't mean I was writing no fiction at all. In the 1960s and 1970s, in fact, I wrote two science-fiction novels and a mystery novel, to say nothing of well over a hundred short stories - but about eighty percent of what I wrote was nonfiction.

One of the most indefatigable nags in the matter of finishing the Foundation series was my good friend, the great science-fiction writer, Lester del Rey. He was constantly telling me I ought to finish the series and was just as constantly suggesting plot devices. He even told Larry Ashmead, then my editor at Doubleday, that if I refused to write more Foundation stories, he, Lester, would be willing to take on the task.

When Ashmead mentioned this to me in 1973, I began another Foundation novel out of sheer desperation. I called it "Lightning Rod" and managed to write fourteen pages before other tasks called me away. The fourteen pages were put away and additional years passed.

In January 1977, Cathleen Jordan, then my editor at Doubleday, suggested I do "an important book - a Foundation novel, perhaps." I said, "I'd rather do an autobiography," and I *did* - 640,000 words of it.

In January 1981, Doubleday apparently lost its temper. At least, Hugh O'Neill, then my editor there, said, "Betty Prashker wants to see you," and marched me into her office. She was then one of the senior editors, and a sweet and gentle person.

She wasted no time. "Isaac," she said, "you are going to write a novel for us and you are going to

sign a contract to that effect.”

“Betty,” I said, “I am already working on a big science book for Doubleday and I have to revise the Biographical Encyclopedia for Doubleday and -”

“It can all wait,” she said. “You are going to sign a contract to do a novel. What’s more, we’re going to give you a \$50,000 advance.”

That was a stunner. I don’t like large advances. They put me under too great an obligation. My average advance is something like \$3,000. Why not? It’s all out of royalties.

I said, “That’s way too much money, Betty.”

“No, it isn’t,” she said.

“Doubleday will lose its shirt,” I said.

“You keep telling us that all the time. It won’t.”

I said, desperately, “All right. Have the contract read that I don’t get any money until I notify you in writing that I have begun the novel.”

“Are you crazy?” she said. “You’ll never start if that clause is in the contract. You get \$25,000 on signing the contract, and \$25,000 on delivering a completed manuscript.”

“But suppose the novel is no good.”

“Now you’re being silly,” she said, and she ended the conversation.

That night, Pat LoBrutto, the science-fiction editor at Doubleday called to express his pleasure. “And remember,” he said, “that when we say ‘novel’ we mean ‘science-fiction novel,’ not anything else. And when we say ‘science-fiction novel,’ we mean ‘Foundation novel’ and not anything else.”

On February 5, 1981, I signed the contract, and within the week, the Doubleday accounting system cranked out the check for \$25,000.

I moaned that I was not my own master anymore and Hugh O’Neill said, cheerfully, “That’s right, and from now on, we’re going to call every other week and say, ‘Where’s the manuscript?’” (But they didn’t. They left me strictly alone, and never even asked for a progress report.)

Nearly four months passed while I took care of a vast number of things I had to do, but about the end of May, I picked up my own copy of *The Foundation Trilogy* and began reading.

I had to. For one thing, I hadn’t read the *Trilogy* in thirty years and while I remembered the general plot, I did not remember the details. Besides, before beginning a new Foundation novel I had to immerse myself in the style and atmosphere of the series.

I read it with mounting uneasiness. I kept waiting for something to happen, and nothing ever did. All three volumes, all the nearly quarter of a million words, consisted of thoughts and of conversations. No action. No physical suspense.

What was all the fuss about, then? Why did everyone want more of that stuff? - To be sure, I couldn’t help but notice that I was turning the pages eagerly, and that I was upset when I finished the book, and that I wanted more, but I was the *author*, for goodness’ sake. You couldn’t go by me.

I was on the edge of deciding it was all a terrible mistake and of insisting on giving back the money, when (quite by accident, I swear) I came across some sentences by science-fiction writer and critic, James Gunn, who, in connection with the Foundation series, said, “Action and romance have little to do with the success of the *Trilogy* - virtually all the action takes place offstage, and the romance is almost invisible - but the stories provide a detective-story fascination with the permutations and reversals of ideas.”

Oh, well, if what was needed were “permutations and reversals of ideas,” then that I could supply. Panic receded, and on June 10, 1981, I dug out the fourteen pages I had written more than eight years before and reread them. They sounded good to me. I didn’t remember where I had been headed back then, but I had worked out what seemed to me to be a good ending now, and, starting page 15 on that day, I proceeded to work toward the new ending.

I found, to my infinite relief, that I had no trouble getting back into a “Foundation-mood,” and, fresh from my rereading, I had Foundation history at my finger-tips.

There were differences, to be sure:

1) The original stories were written for a science-fiction magazine and were from 7,000 to 50,000 words long, and no more. Consequently, each book in the trilogy had at least two stories and lacked unity. I intended to make the new book a single story.

2) I had a particularly good chance for development since Hugh said, “Let the book find its own length, Isaac. We don’t mind a long book.” So I planned on 140,000 words, which was nearly three times the length of “The Mule,” and this gave me plenty of elbow-room, and I could add all sorts of little touches.

3) The Foundation series had been written at a time when our knowledge of astronomy was primitive compared with what it is today. I could take advantage of that and at least *mention* black holes, for instance. I could also take advantage of electronic computers, which had not been invented until I was half through with the series.

The novel progressed steadily, and on January 17, 1982, I began final copy. I brought the manuscript to Hugh O'Neill in batches, and the poor fellow went half-crazy since he insisted on reading it in this broken fashion. On March 25, 1982, I brought in the last bit, and the very next day got the second half of the advance.

I had kept "Lightning Rod" as my working title all the way through, but Hugh finally said, "Is there any way of putting 'Foundation' into the title, Isaac?" I suggested *Foundations at Bay*, therefore, and that may be the title that will actually be used. *

You will have noticed that I have said nothing about the plot of the new Foundation novel. Well, *naturally*. I would rather you buy and read the book.

And yet there is one thing I have to confess to you. I generally manage to tie up all the loose ends into one neat little bow-knot at the end of my stories, no matter how complicated the plot might be. In this case, however, I noticed that when I was all done, one glaring little item remained unresolved.

I am hoping no one else notices it because it clearly points the way to the continuation of the series.

It is even possible that I inadvertently gave this away for at the end of the novel, I wrote: "The End (for now)."

I very much fear that if the novel proves successful, Doubleday will be at my throat again, as Campbell used to be in the old days. And yet what can I do but hope that the novel is very successful indeed. What a quandary!

*Editor's note: The novel was published in October 1982 as *Foundation's Edge*.

PROLOGUE

The Galactic Empire Was Falling.

It was a colossal Empire, stretching across millions of worlds from arm-end to arm-end of the mighty multi-spiral that was the Milky Way. Its fall was colossal, too - and a long one, for it had a long way to go.

It had been falling for centuries before one man became really aware of that fall. That man was Hari Seldon, the man who represented the one spark of creative effort left among the gathering decay. He developed and brought to its highest pitch the science of psychohistory.

Psychohistory dealt not with man, but with man-masses. It was the science of mobs; mobs in their billions. It could forecast reactions to stimuli with something of the accuracy that a lesser science could bring to the forecast of a rebound of a billiard ball. The reaction of one man could be forecast by no known mathematics; the reaction of a billion is something else again.

Hari Seldon plotted the social and economic trends of the time, sighted along the curves and foresaw the continuing and accelerating fall of civilization and the gap of thirty thousand years that must elapse before a struggling new Empire could emerge from the ruins.

It was too late to stop that fall, but not too late to narrow the gap of barbarism. Seldon established two Foundations at "opposite ends of the Galaxy" and their location was so designed that in one short millennium events would knit and mesh so as to force out of them a stronger, more permanent, more benevolent Second Empire.

Foundation (Gnome Press, 1951) has told the story of one of those Foundations during the first two centuries of life.

It began as a settlement of physical scientists on Terminus, a planet at the extreme end of one of the spiral arms of the Galaxy. Separated from the turmoil of the Empire, they worked as compilers of a universal compendium of knowledge, the Encyclopedia Galactica, unaware of the deeper role planned for them by the already-dead Seldon,

As the Empire rotted, the outer regions fell into the hands of independent "kings." The Foundation was threatened by them. However, by playing one petty ruler against another, under the leadership of their first mayor, Salvor Hardin, they maintained a precarious independence. As sole possessors, of nuclear power among worlds which were losing their sciences and falling back on coal and oil, they even

established an ascendancy. The Foundation became the “religious” center of the neighboring kingdoms.

Slowly, the Foundation developed a trading economy as the Encyclopedia receded into the background. Their Traders, dealing in nuclear gadgets which not even the Empire in its heyday could have duplicated for compactness, penetrated hundreds of light-years through the Periphery.

Under Hober Mallow, the first of the Foundation’s Merchant Princes, they developed the techniques of economic warfare to the point of defeating the Republic of Korell, even though that world was receiving support from one of the outer provinces of what was left of the Empire.

At the end of two hundred years, the Foundation was the most powerful state in the Galaxy, except for the remains of the Empire, which, concentrated in the inner third of the Milky Way, still controlled three quarters of the population and wealth of the Universe.

It seemed inevitable that the next danger the Foundation would have to face was the final lash of the dying Empire.

The way must be cleared for the battle of Foundation and Empire.

PART I THE GENERAL

1. SEARCH FOR MAGICIANS

BEL RIOSE In his relatively short career, Riose earned the title of “The Last of the Imperials” and earned it well. A study of his campaigns reveals him to be the equal of Peurifoy in strategic ability and his superior perhaps in his ability to handle men. That he was born in the days of the decline of Empire made it all but impossible for him to equal Peurifoy’s record as a conqueror. Yet he had his chance when, the first of the Empire’s generals to do so, he faced the Foundation squarely....

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA*

*All quotations from the Encyclopedia Galactica here reproduced are taken from the 116th Edition published in 1020 F.E. by the Encyclopedia Galactica Publishing Co., Terminus, with permission of the publishers.

Bel Riose traveled without escort, which is not what court etiquette prescribes for the head of a fleet stationed in a yet-sullen stellar system on the Marches of the Galactic Empire.

But Bel Riose was young and energetic - energetic enough to be sent as near the end of the universe as possible by an unemotional and calculating court - and curious besides. Strange and improbable tales fancifully-repeated by hundreds and murkily-known to thousands intrigued the last faculty; the possibility of a military venture engaged the other two. The combination was overpowering.

He was out of the dowdy ground-car he had appropriated and at the door of the fading mansion that was his destination. He waited. The photonic eye that spanned the doorway was alive, but when the door opened it was by hand.

Bel Riose smiled at the old man. “I am Riose-”

“I recognize you.” The old man remained stiffly and unsurprised in his place. “Your business?”

Riose withdrew a step in a gesture of submission. “One of peace. If you are Ducem Barr, I ask the favor of conversation.”

Ducem Barr stepped aside and in the interior of the house the walls glowed into life. The general entered into daylight.

He touched the wall of the study, then stared at his fingertips. “You have this on Siwenna?”

Barr smiled thinly. “Not elsewhere, I believe. I keep this in repair myself as well as I can. I must apologize for your wait at the door. The automatic device registers the presence of a visitor but will no longer open the door.”

“Your repairs fall short?” The general’s voice was faintly mocking.

“Parts are no longer available. If you will sit, sir. You drink tea?”

“On Siwenna? My good sir, it is socially impossible not to drink it here.”

The old patrician retreated noiselessly with a slow bow that was part of the ceremonious legacy left by the aristocracy of the last century’s better days.

Riose looked after his host’s departing figure, and his studied urbanity grew a bit uncertain at the edges. His education had been purely military; his experience likewise. He had, as the cliché, has it, faced

death many times; but always death of a very familiar and tangible nature, Consequently, there is no inconsistency in the fact that the idolized lion of the Twentieth Fleet felt chilled in the suddenly musty atmosphere of an ancient room.

The general recognized the small black-ivroid boxes that lined the shelves to be books. Their titles were unfamiliar. He guessed that the large structure at one end of the room was the receiver that transmuted the books into sight-and-sound on demand. He had never seen one in operation; but he had heard of them.

Once he had been told that long before, during the golden ages when the Empire had been co-extensive with the entire Galaxy, nine houses out of every ten had such receivers - and such rows of books.

But there were borders to watch now; books were for old men. And half the stories told about the old days were mythical anyway. More than half.

The tea arrived, and Riöse seated himself. Ducem Barr lifted his cup. "To your honor."

"Thank you. To yours."

Ducem Barr said deliberately, "You are said to be young. Thirty-five?"

"Near enough. Thirty-four."

"In that case," said Barr, with soft emphasis, "I could not begin better than by informing you regretfully that I am not in the possession of love charms, potions, or philtres. Nor am I in the least capable of influencing the favors of any young lady as may appeal to you."

"I have no need of artificial aids in that respect, sir." The complacency undeniably present in the general's voice was stirred with amusement. "Do you receive many requests for such commodities?"

"Enough. Unfortunately, an uninformed public tends to confuse scholarship with magicianry, and love life seems to be that factor which requires the largest quantity of magical tinkering."

"And so would seem most natural. But I differ. I connect scholarship with nothing but the means of answering difficult questions."

The Siwennian considered somberly, "You may be as wrong as they!"

"That may turn out or not." The young general set down his cup in its flaring sheath and it refilled. He dropped the offered flavor-capsule into it with a small splash. "Tell me then, patrician, who are the magicians? The real ones."

Barr seemed startled at a title long-unused. He said, "There are no magicians."

"But people speak of them. Siwenna crawls with the tales of them. There are cults being built about them. There is some strange connection between it and those groups among your countrymen who dream and drivel of ancient days and what they call liberty and autonomy. Eventually the matter might become a danger to the State."

The old man shook his head. "Why ask me? Do you smell rebellion, with myself at the head?"

Riöse shrugged, "Never. Never. Oh, it is not a thought completely ridiculous. Your father was an exile in his day; you yourself a patriot and a chauvinist in yours. It is indelicate in me as a guest to mention it, but my business here requires it. And yet a conspiracy now? I doubt it. Siwenna has had the spirit beat out of it these three generations."

The old man replied with difficulty, "I shall be as indelicate a host as you a guest. I shall remind you that once a viceroy thought as you did of the spiritless Siwennians. By the orders of that viceroy my father became a fugitive pauper, my brothers martyrs, and my sister a suicide. Yet that viceroy died a death sufficiently horrible at the hands of these same slavish Siwennians."

"Ah, yes, and there you touch nearly on something I could wish to say. For three years the mysterious death of that viceroy has been no mystery to me. There was a young soldier of his personal guard whose actions were of interest. You were that soldier, but there is no need of details, I think."

Barr was quiet. "None. What do you propose?"

"That you answer my questions."

"Not under threats. I am old enough for life not to mean particularly overmuch."

"My good sir, these are hard times," said Riöse, with meaning, "and you have children and friends. You have a country for which you have mouthed phrases of love and folly in the past. Come, if I should decide to use force, my aim would not be so poor as to strike you."

Barr said coldly, "What do you want?"

Riöse held the empty cup as he spoke. "Patrician, listen to me. These are days when the most successful soldiers are those whose function is to lead the dress parades that wind through the imperial palace grounds on feast days and to escort the sparkling pleasure ships that carry His Imperial Splendor to the summer planets. I ... I am a failure. I am a failure at thirty-four, and I shall stay a failure. Because, you see, I like to fight.

“That’s why they sent me here. I’m too troublesome at court. I don’t fit in with the etiquette. I offend the dandies and the lord admirals, but I’m too good a leader of ships and men to be disposed of shortly by being marooned in space. So Siwenna is the substitute. It’s a frontier world; a rebellious and a barren province. It is far away, far enough away to satisfy all.

“And so I moulder. There are no rebellions to stamp down, and the border viceroys do not revolt lately, at least, not since His Imperial Majesty’s late father of glorious memory made an example of Mountel of Paramay.”

“A strong Emperor,” muttered Barr.

“Yes, and we need more of them. He is my master; remember that. These are his interests I guard.”

Barr shrugged unconcernedly. “How does all this relate to the subject?”

“I’ll show you in two words. The magicians I’ve mentioned come from beyond-out there beyond the frontier guards, where the stars are scattered thinly-”

“Where the stars are scattered thinly,” quoted Barr, “And the cold of space seeps in.”

“Is that poetry?” Riose frowned. Verse seemed frivolous at the moment. “In any case, they’re from the Periphery - from the only quarter where I am free to fight for the glory of the Emperor.”

“And thus serve His Imperial Majesty’s interests and satisfy your own love of a good fight.”

“Exactly. But I must know what I fight; and there you can help.”

“How do you know?”

Riose nibbled casually at a cakelet. “Because for three years I have traced every rumor, every myth, every breath concerning the magicians - and of all the library of information I have gathered, only two isolated facts are unanimously agreed upon, and are hence certainly true. The first is that the magicians come from the edge of the Galaxy opposite Siwenna; the second is that your father once met a magician, alive and actual, and spoke with him.”

The aged Siwennian stared unblinkingly, and Riose continued, “You had better tell me what you know-”

Barr said thoughtfully, “It would be interesting to tell you certain things. It would be a psychohistoric experiment of my own.”

“What kind of experiment?”

“Psychohistoric.” The old man had an unpleasant edge to his smile. Then, crisply, “You’d better have more tea. I’m going to make a bit of a speech.”

He leaned far back into the soft cushions of his chair. The wall-lights had softened to a pink-ivory glow, which mellowed even the soldier’s hard profile.

Ducem Barr began, “My own knowledge is the result of two accidents; the accidents of being born the son of my father, and of being born the native of my country. It begins over forty years ago, shortly after the great Massacre, when my father was a fugitive in the forests of the South, while I was a gunner in the viceroy’s personal fleet. This same viceroy, by the way, who had ordered the Massacre, and who died such a cruel death thereafter.”

Barr smiled grimly, and continued, “My father was a Patrician of the Empire and a Senator of Siwenna. His name was Onum Barr.”

Riose interrupted impatiently, “I know the circumstances of his exile very well. You needn’t elaborate upon it.”

The Siwennian ignored him and proceeded without deflection. “During his exile a wanderer came upon him; a merchant from the edge of the Galaxy; a young man who spoke a strange accent, knew nothing of recent Imperial history, and who was protected by an individual force-shield.”

“An individual force-shield?” Riose glared. “You speak extravagance. What generator could be powerful enough to condense a shield to the size of a single man? By the Great Galaxy, did he carry five thousand myria-tons of nuclear power-source about with him on a little wheeled gocart?”

Barr said quietly, “This is the magician of whom you hear whispers, stories and myths. The name ‘magician’ is not lightly earned. He carried no generator large enough to be seen, but not the heaviest weapon you can carry in your hand would have as much as creased the shield he bore.”

“Is this all the story there is? Are the magicians born of maunderings of an old man broken by suffering and exile?”

“The story of the magicians antedated even my father, sir. And the proof is more concrete. After leaving my father, this merchant that men call a magician visited a Tech-man at the city to which my father had guided him, and there he left a shield-generator of the type he wore. That generator was retrieved by

my father after his return from exile upon the execution of the bloody viceroy. It took a long time to find-

"The generator hangs on the wall behind you, sir. It does not work. It never worked but for the first two days; but if you'll look at it, you will see that no one in the Empire ever designed it."

Bel Riose reached for the belt of linked metal that clung to the curved wall. It came away with a little sucking noise as the tiny adhesion-field broke at the touch of his hand. The ellipsoid at the apex of the belt held his attention. It was the size of a walnut.

"This-" he said.

"Was the generator," nodded Barr. "But it *was* the generator. The secret of its workings are beyond discovery now. Sub-electronic investigations have shown it to be fused into a single lump of metal and not all the most careful study of the diffraction patterns have sufficed to distinguish the discrete parts that had existed before fusion."

"Then your 'proof' still lingers on the frothy border of words backed by no concrete evidence."

Barr shrugged. "You have demanded my knowledge of me and threatened its extortion by force. If you choose to meet it with skepticism, what is that to me? Do you want me to stop?"

"Go on!" said the general, harshly.

"I continued my father's researches after he died, and then the second accident I mentioned came to help me, for Siwenna was well known to Hari Seldon."

"And who is Hari Seldon?"

"Hari Seldon was a scientist of the reign of the Emperor, Daluben IV. He was a psychohistorian; the last and greatest of them all. He once visited Siwenna, when Siwenna was a great commercial center, rich in the arts and sciences."

"Hmph," muttered Riose, sourly, "where is the stagnant planet that does not claim to have been a land of overflowing wealth in older days?"

"The days I speak of are the days of two centuries ago, when the Emperor yet ruled to the uttermost star; when Siwenna was a world of the interior and not a semi-barbarian border province. In those days, Hari Seldon foresaw the decline of Imperial power and the eventual barbarization of the entire Galaxy."

Riose laughed suddenly. "He foresaw that? Then he foresaw wrong, my good scientist. I suppose you call yourself that. Why, the Empire is more powerful now than it has been in a millennium. Your old eyes are blinded by the cold bleakness of the border. Come to the inner worlds some day; come to the warmth and the wealth of the center."

The old man shook his head somberly. "Circulation ceases first at the outer edges. It will take a while yet for the decay to reach the heart. That is, the apparent, obvious-to-all decay, as distinct from the inner decay that is an old story of some fifteen centuries."

"And so this Hari Seldon foresaw a Galaxy of uniform barbarism," said Riose, good-humoredly. "And what then, eh?"

"So he established two foundations at the extreme opposing ends of the Galaxy - Foundations of the best, and the youngest, and the strongest, there to breed, grow, and develop. The worlds on which they were placed were chosen carefully; as were the times and the surroundings. All was arranged in such a way that the future as foreseen by the unalterable mathematics of psychohistory would involve their early isolation from the main body of Imperial civilization and their gradual growth into the germs of the Second Galactic Empire - cutting an inevitable barbarian interregnum from thirty thousand years to scarcely a single thousand."

"And where did you find out all this? You seem to know it in detail."

"I don't and never did," said the patrician with composure. "It is the painful result of the piecing together of certain evidence discovered by my father and a little more found by myself. The basis is flimsy and the superstructure has been romanticized into existence to fill the huge gaps. But I am convinced that it is essentially true."

"You are easily convinced."

"Am I? It has taken forty years of research."

"Hmph. Forty years! I could settle the question in forty days. In fact, I believe I ought to. It would be - different."

"And how would you do that?"

"In the obvious way. I could become an explorer. I could find this Foundation you speak of and observe with my eyes. You say there are two?"

"The records speak of two. Supporting evidence has been found only for one, which is

understandable, for the other is at the extreme end of the long axis of the Galaxy.”

“Well, we’ll visit the near one.” The general was on his feet, adjusting his belt.

“You know where to go?” asked Barr.

“In a way. In the records of the last viceroy but one, he whom you murdered so effectively, there are suspicious tales of outer barbarians. In fact, one of his daughters was given in marriage to a barbarian prince. I’ll find my way.”

He held out a hand. “I thank you for your hospitality.”

Ducem Barr touched the hand with his fingers and bowed formally. “Your visit was a great honor.”

“As for the information you gave me,” continued Bel Riose, “I’ll know how to thank you for that when I return.”

Ducem Barr followed his guest submissively to the outer door and said quietly to the disappearing ground-car, “And *if* you return.”

2. THE MAGICIANS

FOUNDATION ... With forty years of expansion behind them, the Foundation faced the menace of Riose. The epic days of Hardin and Mallow had gone and with them were gone a certain hard daring and resolution....

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA

There were four men in the room, and the room was set apart where none could approach. The four men looked at each other quickly, then lengthily at the table that separated them. There were four bottles on the table and as many full glasses, but no one had touched them.

And then the man nearest the door stretched out an arm and drummed a slow, padding rhythm on the table.

He said, “Are you going to sit and wonder forever? Does it matter who speaks first?”

“Speak you first, then,” said the big man directly opposite. “You’re the one who should be the most worried.”

Sennett Forell chuckled with noiseless nonhumor. “Because you think I’m the richest. Well - Or is it that you expect me to continue as I have started. I don’t suppose you forget that it was my own Trade Fleet that captured this scout ship of theirs.”

“You had the largest fleet,” said a third, “and the best pilots; which is another way of saying you are the richest. It was a fearful risk; and would have been greater for one of us.”

Sennett Forell chuckled again. “There is a certain facility in risk-taking that I inherit from my father. After all, the essential point in running a risk is that the returns justify it. As to which, witness the fact that the enemy ship was isolated and captured without loss to ourselves or warning to the others.”

That Forell was a distant collateral relative of the late great Hober Mallow was recognized openly throughout the Foundation. That he was Mallow’s illegitimate son was accepted quietly to just as wide an extent.

The fourth man blinked his little eyes stealthily. Words crept out from between thin lips. “It is nothing to sleep over in fat triumph, this grasping of little ships. Most likely, it will but anger that young man further.”

“You think he needs motives?” questioned Forell, scornfully.

“I do, and this might, or will, save him the vexation of having to manufacture one.” The fourth man spoke slowly, “Hober Mallow worked otherwise. And Salvor Hardin. They let others take the uncertain paths of force, while they maneuvered surely and quietly.”

Forell shrugged. “This ship has proved its value. Motives are cheap and we have sold this one at a profit.” There was the satisfaction of the born Trader in that. He continued, “The young man is of the old Empire.”

“We knew that,” said the second man, the big one, with rumbling discontent.

“We suspected that,” corrected Forell, softly. “If a man comes with ships and wealth, with overtures of friendliness, and with offers of trade, it is only sensible to refrain from antagonizing him, until we are certain that the profitable mask is not a face after all. But now-”

There was a faint whining edge to the third man’s voice as he spoke. “We might have been even more careful. We might have found out first. We might have found out before allowing him to leave. It