

ISAAC

ASIMOV

THE FOUNDATION NOVELS



FOUNDATION

1.

His name was Gaal Dornick and he was just a country boy who had never seen Trantor before. That is, not in real life. He *had* seen it many times on the hyper-video, and occasionally in tremendous three-dimensional newscasts covering an Imperial Coronation or the opening of a Galactic Council. Even though he had lived all his life on the world of Synnax, which circled a star at the edges of the Blue Drift, he was not cut off from civilization, you see. At that time, no place in the Galaxy was.

There were nearly twenty-five million inhabited planets in the Galaxy then, and not one but owed allegiance to the Empire whose seat was on Trantor. It was the last half-century in which that could be said.

To Gaal, this trip was the undoubted climax of his young, scholarly life. He had been in space before so that the trip, as a voyage and nothing more, meant little to him. To be sure, he had traveled previously only as far as Synnax's only satellite in order to get the data on the mechanics of meteor driftage which he needed for his dissertation, but space-travel was all one whether one travelled half a million miles, or as many light years.

He had steeled himself just a little for the Jump through hyper-space, a phenomenon one did not experience in simple interplanetary trips. The Jump

remained, and would probably remain forever, the only practical method of travelling between the stars. Travel through ordinary space could proceed at no rate more rapid than that of ordinary light (a bit of scientific knowledge that belonged among the items known since the forgotten dawn of human history), and that would have meant years of travel between even the nearest of inhabited systems. Through hyper-space, that unimaginable region that was neither space nor time, matter nor energy, something nor nothing, one could traverse the length of the Galaxy in the interval between two neighboring instants of time.

Gaal had waited for the first of those jumps with a little dread curled gently in his stomach, and it ended in nothing more than a trifling jar, a little internal kick which ceased an instant before he could be sure he had felt it. That was all.

And after that, there was only the ship, large and glistening; the cool production of 12,000 years of Imperial progress; and himself, with his doctorate in mathematics freshly obtained and an invitation from the great Hari Seldon to come to Trantor and join the vast and somewhat mysterious Seldon Project.

What Gaal was waiting for after the disappointment of the Jump was that first sight of Trantor. He haunted the View-room. The steel shutter-lids were rolled back at announced times and he was always there, watching the hard brilliance of the stars, enjoying the incredible hazy swarm of a star cluster, like a giant conglomeration of fire-flies caught in mid-motion and stilled forever. At one time there was the cold, blue-white smoke of a gaseous nebula within five light years of the ship, spreading over the win-

and there was a lump in Gaal's throat. He had never seen Trantor spread out in all its incredibility, as large as life, and he hadn't expected to have to wait longer.

One of the great masterworks of science fiction, the Foundation novels of Isaac Asimov are unsurpassed for their unique blend of nonstop action, daring ideas, and extensive world-building. The story of our future begins with the history of Foundation and its greatest psychohistorian: Hari Seldon.

FOUNDATION

For twelve thousand years the Galactic Empire has ruled supreme. Now it is dying. Only Hari Seldon, creator of the revolutionary science of psychohistory, can see into the future—a dark age of ignorance, barbarism, and warfare that will last thirty thousand years. To preserve knowledge and save mankind, Seldon gathers the best minds in the Empire—both scientists and scholars—and brings them to a bleak planet at the edge of the Galaxy to serve as a beacon of hope for future generations. He calls his sanctuary the Foundation.

But soon the fledgling Foundation finds itself at the mercy of corrupt warlords rising in the wake of the receding Empire. And mankind's last best hope is faced with an agonizing choice: submit to the barbarians and live as slaves—or take a stand for freedom and risk total destruction.

Visit Bantam's website at www.bantamdell.com.

US \$7.99 / \$11.99 CAN

ISBN 0-553-29335-4



9 780553 293357

50799

