



DUNE

ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM

TIME BECOMES  
A NARROW DOOR

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# TIME BECOMES A NARROW DOOR

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*'You cannot avoid the interplay of politics within an orthodox religion. This power struggle permeates the training, educating and disciplining of the orthodox community. Because of this pressure, the leaders of such a community inevitably must face that ultimate internal question: to succumb to complete opportunism as the price of maintaining their rule, or risk sacrificing themselves for the sake of the orthodox ethic.'*

*-from "Muad'Dib: The Religious Issues" by the Princess Irulan*

# ADVENTURE OUTLINE

After Lady Nayeli Mascaro calls in a debt over the player character's House, demanding they rescue her son from the grips of a local cult, they discover the son isn't caught in the grips of the cult but is leading it. His community of devout followers claims Renshu Mascaro has prophetic insights and insists he is their foretold Mahdi. Caught between mother and son, the characters must make a choice. Do they return the son against his will? Do they allow the son to remain and break their ruler's word to House Mascaro? Or do they hand over the prophet to an interested third party for their own benefit?

## STRUCTURE

The adventure includes a prelude and four Acts. During the prelude, a captured spy reveals a clandestine meeting between the House's ruler (or contract holder) and Lady Nayeli, consort to Count Mascaro and Bene Gesserit trained concubine.

In the first Act, Lady Mascaro explains her son and only heir, Renshu, has not been home in several months. He has joined a local cult who believes he is the Mahdi, a prophetic figure who, according to legend, is destined to lead the Fremen people in jihad. This makes him a target for House Mascaro's enemies. After the House ruler tasks the player characters with retrieving the Lady's son, they travel to a pyon village to find Renshu and bring him back to Arrakeen.

In Act Two, the player characters ingratiate themselves to the cult by performing various tasks. But this is complicated with the arrival of Fortuna, a Bene Gesserit agent. She intends to bring Renshu to the Sisterhood. Fortuna asks the player characters to deliver Renshu to her instead of Lady Mascaro, potentially earning them an influential ally.

The player characters meet Renshu during Act Three. At first, Renshu's charisma appears to come from his compassion, but it isn't long before they experience his power. And after he puts them through a test, they earn his trust. The act concludes with a spice ritual and visions of events yet to come.

In Act Four, the player characters recover from their spice hangover and debate what to do next. They can allow Renshu to stay with the cult and anger Lady Mascaro, they can resort to combat and kidnapping, or they can pursue a more creative alternative. No matter their decision, this choice shifts alliances and creates new adversaries.

### RENSHU MASCARO IS NOT THE TRUE MAHDI

It is essential to clarify that Renshu Mascaro is not the true Mahdi. He has enhanced talents, but whether they are a side effect of heavy spice consumption or an unforeseen consequence of the Sisterhood's breeding program remains unclear. Unsurprising, the Fremen and the Bene Gesserit would like to know which it is. Rest assured, like so many false prophets, Renshu merely serves as a prelude for the eventual arrival of Paul Atreides. His powers are nowhere close to the true Kwisatz Haderach.

### WHEN IS THE ADVENTURE SET?

This adventure takes place before the events of *Dune*. While House Harkonnen likely controls Arrakis, the gamemaster can adjust the story. This stand-alone adventure does not require previous knowledge of the setting. Player characters can be members of their own House, work under franchise for another, or as free agents under contract.

### ASSETS

'Time Becomes a Narrow Door' is about moral dilemmas. It should not be easy to reach a consensus about Renshu and his followers, but it should also not be so fraught with disagreement the player characters split into warring camps or factions.

The player characters can succeed without using violence, so they do not need weapons, shields, or armor. However, if the players enjoy combat in their adventures, the gamemaster can make personal combat Assets available. Listed throughout the adventure are character sheets for notable supporting characters, but feel free to adjust the mechanics to accommodate the player characters' experience level.

This adventure requires travel to the nearby village of Onn, some 50 kilometers southeast of Arrakeen, located within the Shield Wall. Characters can travel via ground-car without attracting wormsign, ornithopter, pack animal, or on foot. Traveling on foot requires stillsuits. If they do not have access to these, the gamemaster should have player characters acquire them.





## PRELUDE: PROMISES MAKE DEBT

Alarms ring. A house guard shouts, "Spy!" just as a House servant named Faer rounds the corner. She has a holorecorder in her hand and a guilty look on her face. As the guards close in on her position, Faer makes a break for it.

Player characters can:

- ❏ Physically apprehend Faer with an average (D1) **Battle** test.
- ❏ Make a challenging (D2) **Communicate** test to intimidate Faer into giving up.
- ❏ **Move** (challenging, D2) throughout the building, cutting off her means of escape.

Once captured, as the player characters secure her and take possession of the holorecording, a successful **Communicate** (challenging, D2) test draws from her a confession that she's working for a criminal syndicate or rival House.

The holorecording depicts a troubling exchange between their ruler and Lady Nayeli, concubine to Count Mascaró.

*Black frames the left and right sides of the moving image as if looking in from the other side of a cracked door or an open spyslot. The moonlight from the twin moons of Arrakis mixes with dimly lit glowglobes to cast a long shadow along the study floor. The shadow is of a woman draped in a dusty cloak standing across from your seated House ruler. Her hushed words are like the hisses of a snake. Each one flicked rather than spoken.*

*"You will see to my son. Do not forget your debt to me."*

*At the mention of a debt, your ruler grimaces and offers a muffled reply. The tone is reassuring, but whatever is said doesn't ease the tension between them.*

*"You made a promise, and now you must keep that promise, or else I will dedicate my remaining years and my considerable influence to reducing your domain to rubble."*

*"Lady Nayeli, I know what I have and haven't done." The ruler stands. "And I will not be commanded or threatened in my own home. This is a family affair. Your family affair. And while I understand your..." The audio becomes indistinct as the ruler walks to the window.*

*"One word." Lady Nayeli says. "Mahdi."*

*The ruler turns to face her. "It has come to that then."*

*"It has."*

# ACT I: MOTHER IS A VERB

The next day, the ruler summons the player characters to the study seen in the recording and introduces them to an ally of the House, Lady Nayeli Mascaró.

"My son and the Count's only heir, Renshu, has not been home in several months. He has become involved in a local religious cult. These are simple people, fanatics, and natives to this desert planet, and they believe my son is a prophetic figure. Of course, he is not, but they think he sees the future and that he will be their savior. The Imperium does not like prophets, and if word spreads, my son becomes a target for my enemies. Prophets have a way of dying by violence.

I believe Renshu is in the pyon village of Onn, near Arrakeen. Travel there, find him, and bring him home so we can look after his safety until this unwarranted attention fades."

She departs, leaving the ruler to answer player character questions. If the player characters ask about the promise or debt, the ruler notes there wasn't any mention of it in the briefing with Lady Nayeli. It's curious how they know. How much the ruler elaborates depends on the relationship with the characters and the judgment of the gamemaster.

Espionage Assets, however, could reveal more about the backstory between the two Houses while raising the stakes for player characters. The gamemaster can create a debt or customize one of the examples.

House Mascaró, commanded by the aging Count Takoda Mascaró, manufactures heavy machinery for spice mining. The House could have:

- ✧ Vouched for the ruler when they first arrived on Arrakis
- ✧ Provided machinery and an alibi for a less-than-legal project
- ✧ Financed a substantial loan for the capital used in an expansion of domain

## GATHERING INFORMATION

The pyon village of Onn lies 50 kilometers south of Arrakeen within the Shield Wall on the other side of the Old Gap. Traveling requires a short ornithopter ride across the desert, an hour-long drive via groundcar, or a long ten-hour hike. As player characters prepare for their journey, they can use their Traits and Assets to gain additional information. For example, suppose a player character is a Noble Archetype or has an appropriate Intrigue Asset. In that case, they may have access to the history of House Mascaró, including the personal backstories of Nayeli and Renshu. The players may also have their own ideas, but ultimately the gamemaster determines the available information.

- ✧ The courtesans of Arrakeen are aware of Renshu's exploits, as he frequented their brothels with some regularity. However, his favorite, Jai, reports they have not seen Renshu in many months.
- ✧ Criminals and smugglers routinely sell spice to Renshu and his followers. Miran Rocha is an influential black marketeer operating out of Carthag (see **Sand and Dust**). She admits to supplying illegal spice to a street dealer named Moti. Moti is a Onn local and profits regularly off the cult.
- ✧ If a Freman is among the player characters, or they have access to Freman contacts, Drasil, a Freman warrior, can explain how the followers of Renshu call him the 'Mahdi' (see **Core Rulebook** p. 313). According to legend, the Mahdi will be an offworlder and son of a Bene Gesserit who will lead the Freman people in their jihad. If Drasil is not available to the player characters, the gamemaster can substitute a different Freman warrior in his place.
- ✧ If a player character is a Bene Gesserit or has access to Bene Gesserit contacts, they know of the Bene Gesserit breeding program. Sister Nazanin confirms this and offers rumors of Renshu's prophetic visions. She suspects Renshu may be a failed Kwisatz Haderach.
- ✧ Political Assets with ties to the Harkonnen government are aware of this cult. They might talk to Juan Demsi, a low-level bureaucrat, who places the cult in a small corner of Onn. The Harkonnen consider the cult a nuisance to keep an eye on for now.

## THE STREETS OF ONN

The native population of Arrakis consists of nomadic Freman and the pyon class—those born on the desert planet but living under the full authority of the siridar governor. These 'city folk' are an amalgamation of three different groups. Some are offworlders, living and working for various Houses and interests. Others are non-Fremen, born on Arrakis, but living and dying in the cities. Finally, some were once Freman who left the sietches long ago and migrated into the cities and have, over several generations, homogenized with the other city folk.

On Arrakis, for the most part, the city folk stay in the cities, and the Freman stay in the sietches. The villages of Arrakis, however, are a different matter. In those outposts surrounding Arrakeen and Carthag, city folk are most of the population, but Freman do intermingle. Onn is no exception.

Built with high stone walls to hold back the fierce desert storms, Onn is a sprawl of unremarkable single-story



## NAYELI, LADY OF HOUSE MASCARO

### NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Lady Nayeli Mascaró will never be a wife. From a young age, the Sisterhood groomed her to do one thing—give birth to Count Takoda Mascaró's heir. She completed her training on Wallach IX, although has not yet undergone the spice agony to become a Reverend Mother. She then followed the Bene Gesserit's orders and dangled herself in front of the Count like a plump worm he would devour.

Once she gave birth to Renshu, she thought the Bene Gesserit would release her from further service to the Count. Even if she could not necessarily leave Count Mascaró, an appropriately noble wife would relieve some of the burdens. However, twenty years later, the aging Count remains an eligible bachelor.

Time and duty in the loveless relationship have shaped Lady Nayeli's face into an unreadable mask. At some point, she settled on a pleasantly neutral expression and, in public, never wavered from it again.

DRIVE	STATEMENT	
DUTY:	3	
FAITH:	6	Duty supersedes happiness.
JUSTICE:	7	I must protect my son at all costs.
POWER:	5	
TRUTH:	4	
SKILL	FOCUSES	
BATTLE:	3	
COMMUNICATE:	7	Persuasion, Intimidation
DISCIPLINE:	7	Command
MOVE:	5	
UNDERSTAND:	5	

**Traits:** Bene Gesserit, Noble

### TALENTS:

☞ **Prana-Bindu Training:** Lady Mascaró can re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.

☞ **Voice:** Nayeli can spend 1–3 Threat to buy that many automatic successes on a Communicate test.

**Assets:** Bodkin, Ornithopter, Luxury Retreat

structures. Attached between are canvasses that cover the streets. Under this shade, townsfolk bustle about their day, and the elderly sit in stalls drinking spice coffee despite the heat. The occasional child sprints through the streets, sometimes kicking a ball, and sometimes followed by a worried parent. Harvester crews and spice miners stumble home from a hard day's labor, and traders barter over the price of goods.

A few Harkonnen soldiers present in the central square keep the peace, but they spend more time talking to each other than patrolling. Occasionally, a proselytizing street preacher catches their attention, but they do not appear concerned.

Cyrin, the preacher and recruiter for the cult, has the blue eyes that mark her as a longtime resident of Arrakis, likely a native. Around her neck is a rust-colored scarf with the ends draped in a way reminiscent of a stole. As the player characters approach, she continues her sermon.

*"Hear me! Hear me! Open your ears! Open your eyes and turn not away from the truth.*

*From a thousand light-years away, they move us like pawns. We are their toy soldiers forced to fight in their wars. Forced to harvest the spice they squander for their greedy gains. Without us, they would have nothing. We keep the heart of the known universe beating!*

*But do not despair! What will happen has already happened, and we can choose to embrace it! To face it! To live our lives as free people. To stand against this tyranny.*

*We have a savior! Here with you is the Mahdi! The water-bringer! The one who will lead us to paradise. Open your ears and eyes and join his cause. For together, like an earthquake, we shall change the landscape of Arrakis! We shall overthrow these kings and queens of the universe and claim that which is rightfully ours!"*



Player characters can:

- ❖ **Communicate** (average, D1) with Cyrin and offer (or feign) interest in joining the cause.
- ❖ Intimidate Cyrin with a challenging (D2) **Discipline** test, demanding she brings them to the cult's location.
- ❖ Follow Cyrin back to the cult via stealth with a challenging (D2) **Move** test.

## BYPASS CYRIN

The players do not need to engage Cyrin. The village is small enough that any local could point them in the direction of the commune. If they reach the neighborhood without an escort, Renshu's followers still welcome them. And Cyrin can arrive behind them to offer a tour.

## THE COMMUNITY

The cult lives in an isolated section of Onn. The neighborhood is a collection of connected apartments with an open communal area where men, women, and children talk or play. The player characters find a peaceful community of about 70 people who are no different from the other pyons living in the village. These families, all Renshu followers, wear various garments colored rust red. A few young men and women near the entrance appear to guard the community.

Depending on how the characters interacted with Cyrin, the preacher offers them a community tour. It reveals nothing overtly suspicious. The followers believe Renshu is their savior, the Mahdi, and promote unity, loyalty, and the overthrow of those who have persecuted them for thousands of years.

What's striking is the surety of their beliefs. They are not naïve nor brainwashed. They believe their destiny is predetermined and that Renshu's visions confirm this. Knowing that their fate cannot change, they embrace the present, knowing it leads to a victorious future. Where they see injustice, they intervene, whether giving water to thirsty people or fighting off criminals and intruders.

Consisting of both Fremen and city folk, the followers appear open to outsiders and potential recruits. Unfortunately, Renshu is not in the neighborhood. He has gone into the desert in search of enlightenment. But in return for assisting the community with several tasks, the members promise to introduce the player characters to Renshu once he returns.



## IF THE PLAYERS CHOOSE VIOLENCE

This adventure relies on social maneuvering with player characters interacting with Renshu's followers either with genuine interest or deception to infiltrate them. But this is not their only option. Some player characters may resort to violence or observe the cult from a distance to kidnap Renshu once he returns from the desert.

## RESORT TO VIOLENCE

Overt violence provokes the followers of Renshu. This is not a commune of pacifists. The followers of Renshu are a group of townsfolk and Fremen who believe they will lead a revolution to free their brethren. While most are not as deadly as Sardaukar, they do fight to kill.

Three circles of combat-capable followers protect Renshu. The outermost circle has basic combat training—men and women who know how to defend themselves. The next circle includes current or former soldiers like the young men and women protecting the community from intruders. Lastly, Renshu's inner circle is a well-trained entourage comprised of military veterans and a small handful of Fremen warriors.

The community can be a single zone of conflict, or to make combat more dynamic, three zones. The first zone is the main entrance to the community and the primary means of escape. The second zone is the communal area, which has the trait 'Crowded.' The third zone leads to the followers' apartments and includes the 'Fortified' trait. Most of the followers, including Renshu, begin combat in the communal area. Two followers maintain their position at the entrance. Renshu's objective is to move to more secure apartments.

For reference, the gamemaster can draw inspiration from the pre-constructed character sheets for Arrakeen Native, House Guard, and Fremen Warrior, all listed in **Chapter 9** of the **Core Rulebook**. Blades are the followers' preferred weapon, but they may have captured and secured a few maula pistols or needle-guns.

Additionally, violence may alarm the entire village, which hosts a small garrison of Harkonnen soldiers. Player characters must kidnap Renshu, make their way to their ornithopter or the desert, and escape the village while fending off his followers and the soldiers assigned to Onn.

- ❖ Do they fight or shoot their way out of the village with a dire (D4) **Battle** test?
- ❖ Do they convince an ornithopter pilot or groundcar taxi to transport them back to Arrakeen with a daunting (D3) **Communicate** success or threaten the pilot and driver with a daunting (D3) **Discipline** test?
- ❖ Do they sneak out of Onn or attempt to outrun the mob with a challenging (D2) **Move** test?



- ❖ Do they hijack an ornithopter with a challenging (D2) **Battle** test? Is there someone who can **Understand** (challenging, D2) how to pilot it?

Maybe the players enjoy the combat-rich challenge of a smash and grab adventure. Perhaps their characters are a group of highly trained mercenaries. If so, the gamemaster should reward their creative ingenuity with close calls and narrow escapes. And while they have possession of Renshu, he can still attempt to engage the player characters using Act Three.

## OBSERVE THE CULT

Player characters may also recon from afar, waiting for an opportune time to sneak into the neighborhood and grab Renshu.

Suppose the characters enter the neighborhood before Renshu returns from the desert. In that case, they can remain hidden until he returns with a challenging (D2) **Move** test with a focus in stealth or a challenging (D2) **Discipline** test with a focus in espionage or infiltration every six hours. If someone discovers them, the followers of Renshu resort to violence.

Suppose they kidnap one of his people as a hostage for leverage with a daunting (D3) **Battle** test. In that case, a young child approaches the characters to relay an invitation from Renshu to join him for a conversation. If the characters refuse the invitation, attack, or take the child hostage, then once again, his community resorts to violence.

## ARRESTED AND JAILED

But suppose the player characters fail in their maneuvers. The gamemaster can choose to pull no punches and let the dice decide who lives and who dies. Another option could be to have Renshu's entourage detain the player characters or the Harkonnen soldiers arrest them.

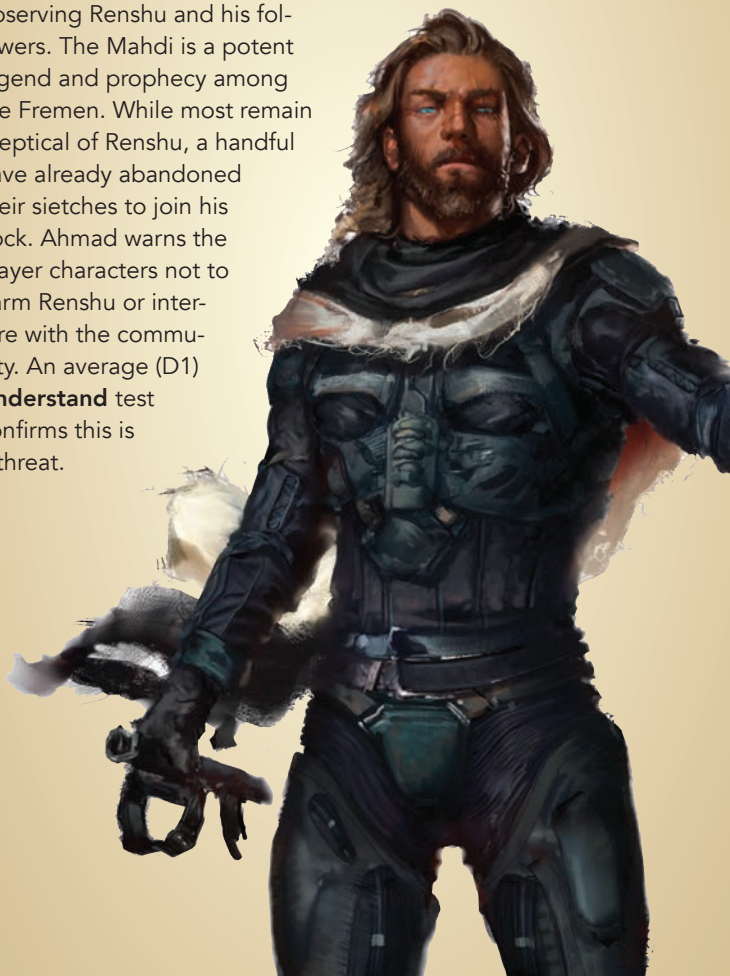
Keep in mind that imperial feudalism is neither balanced nor fair. It doesn't matter if the player characters were trespassing or if they attacked first. Holding legitimate representatives of a noble House against their will could result in the total seizure of the community's property or political executions. If the followers detain the player characters, they should do so with care, strongly encouraging them to wait until Renshu's return.

And while the Harkonnen do not yet view the group as a political threat, the Onn soldiers are highly motivated to keep the populace compliant and trouble-free. Disturbances upset the status quo. An upended status quo leads to organized action like protests, boycotts, rabble-rousing, and rebellion, none of which is helpful to an Authoritarian regime or the ranking officers who have to report it. The soldiers will move quickly to return peace to Onn, even if that means arresting player characters. If the Harkonnen soldiers

## OPTIONAL COMPLICATION: THE FREMEN

If a Freman is among the player characters or the player characters have garnered a positive reputation among the Freman, a Freman warrior introduces himself. Unlike the other community members, he does not wear anything rust-colored. He, like the player characters, is a guest.

He introduces himself as Ahmad, an envoy, instructed by his Naib to venture into the village and conduct trade business. A challenging (D3) **Communicate** test earns Ahmad's trust, and he discloses the Freman's interest in observing Renshu and his followers. The Mahdi is a potent legend and prophecy among the Freman. While most remain skeptical of Renshu, a handful have already abandoned their sietches to join his flock. Ahmad warns the player characters not to harm Renshu or interfere with the community. An average (D1) **Understand** test confirms this is a threat.



arrest them, Cyrin pays the bail and asks the player characters to return to the commune with her.

Neither of these situations helps Lady Nayeli protect her son from their enemies, especially now that the characters have attracted more attention. Even if they succeed in returning Renshu to her, it may still sour future diplomatic relations. The House will also enjoy greater scrutiny from Harkonnen soldiers and possibly a loss of reputation among the Minor Houses.

Finally, when Renshu returns, the entourage escorts the characters to Act Three.



# ACT II: NOTHING EXISTS WITHOUT CAUSE

If the player characters choose to help the community, the gamemaster can tailor tasks to player characters' skills and the overall campaign. These are good Samartian deeds. The gamemaster can choose from the listed story hooks or take inspiration from them.

- ✧ A group of followers wants to give 50 literjons of water to a different neighborhood in Onn as charity from the Mahdi. They ask the player characters to escort them. A possible complication includes a furious water-seller trying to sell to that neighborhood what Renshu's people are giving away for free.
- ✧ A criminal gang operating adjacent to the community wants to extend its territory into the commune's enclave. While Renshu's people have no desire for conflict, they also won't be pushed around. A street fight breaks out between the gang and some of the commune's guards. Player characters can restore peace or assist in defeating the gang.
- ✧ The community owes five thousand solaris to Tanner Voss, a greedy loan shark squeezing them for everything they have. While the community is more than willing to pay the debt, they refuse to pay quadruple the original advance. Cyrin asks the player characters to speak with the loan shark and negotiate a fair settlement.
- ✧ Player characters escort a pair of followers, Sarina and Zeb, to a meeting with smugglers in a reclusive spot where they intend to exchange solaris for spice. Once the smugglers have the money, they double-cross the pair. Sarina and Zeb need to return to the commune with either the solari or the spice.
- ✧ While traveling through the village of Onn, Harkonnen soldiers harass and humiliate Renshu's followers. Player characters can decide to let it happen or step in.
- ✧ As the community sells their goods at the market, the player characters notice three peripheral figures carrying weapons under their jubba cloaks with eyes that never leave the cultists. A challenging (D2) **Discipline** test reveals the trio as mercenaries working for House Soot (or substitute a prior established House).

The player characters don't have to assist the community. They can wait for Renshu's return or implement some alternative plan.

## FORTUNE FAVORS THE BOLD

While the player characters are on the streets of Onn assisting the community, a stranger catches their attention. Their approach can be overt, such as suddenly sidling beside them in the marketplace or cornering them in an alleyway. Perhaps a child tugs at a character's coat to hand them an invitation to a nearby tea house. If one of the player characters is a Bene Gesserit, this message can take the form of coded dots. Regardless, the stranger should design the encounter to take place away from the eyes of Renshu's flock.

The mysterious figure is Fortuna, a Bene Gesserit agent. Given their desire to cultivate the Kwisatz Haderach, they are collecting information on him. Fortuna's mission is to gather intelligence on Renshu's activities and acquire him for further testing if possible. Fortuna would like the player characters to assist her, offering favors in return.

### OPTIONAL COMPLICATION: THE TLEILAXU

One goal of this adventure is to prompt roleplay between player characters based on their morals and ethics. Fortuna's presence in the story adds another layer to the dilemma. But, the Sisterhood has an immense influence on the setting. Bene Gesserit loyalty and ties may cause too much disagreement when deciding what to do with Renshu and threaten to turn the adventure into a fight between player characters.

Suppose a character must be loyal to the Bene Gesserit. In that case, the gamemaster can limit the amount of intelligence Fortuna needs so the group can come to a compromise, or Fortuna can be an imposter.

### OPTION A: FORTUNA IS A BENE GESSERIT

If none of the player characters are Bene Gesserit, treat Fortuna's offer as genuine, but scale the required information and reward. For example, if they provide her detailed information on Renshu and his cult, the Bene Gesserit offers a single favor with Fortuna as their proxy. If they hand Renshu over to the Bene Gesserit (instead of his mother), the Sisterhood might grant more favors or establish Fortuna as a reliable contact. The Sisterhood has spies in every corner of the galaxy, and each favor can acquire solid intelligence on almost any individual, House, or faction.



FORTUNA, BENE GESSERIT AGENT

NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Fortuna grew up hard, born to the slums of a backward planet in an unremarkable corner of the galaxy. She fought for every scrap of food while dodging disease and street gangs. Using her talents for mimicry and sleight-of-hand, she survived by pickpocketing, confidence scams, and petty theft until a visiting Bene Gesserit Truthsayer snatched her hand as soon as her tricky fingers touched the solari in the woman’s purse.

The Truthsayer twisted the delicate bones of Fortuna’s hand and waited, giving her a choice. She could lose the hand and whatever else the Sister wanted to take from her, or she could agree to train on Wallach IX. Fortuna chose the latter.

The Bene Gesserit Sisterhood provided Fortuna a crash course in basic academia and etiquette, but she was neither destined to marry a noble or participate in the breeding program. The Sisterhood put her innate talents to use as a courier, saboteur, and spy. Arrakis, the heart of the known universe, is her first assignment. With little margin for error, the young Sister is keenly aware of the many eyes on her.

**Special Note:** To replace Fortuna with a Tleilaxu Face Dancer, keep her backstory as an official cover. Add ‘Imposter’ to Fortuna’s traits. No other mechanical change is necessary.

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	6	I know my orders.
FAITH:	4	
JUSTICE:	3	
POWER:	5	
TRUTH:	7	Truth is but a lie unchallenged.

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	3	
COMMUNICATE:	7	Acting, Deceit
DISCIPLINE:	6	
MOVE:	6	Body Control
UNDERSTAND:	4	

**Traits:** Bene Gesserit, Spy

TALENTS:

Hidden Motives: When an opponent fails an Understand or Communicate test against Fortuna, she may immediately create a trait that reflects a mistaken belief they have about her.

Prana-Bindu Training: Fortuna can re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.

**Assets:** Cibus Hood, Concealable Dagger, Local Spy Network Fortuna, Bene Gesserit Agent

OPTION B: FORTUNA IS A FACE DANCER

A Bene Gesserit player character among the party may find themselves torn between the group’s plan and their loyalty to the Sisterhood. In this situation, a Tleilaxu Face Dancer can kill, replace, and impersonate or even invent Fortuna.

Fortuna can ask the player characters to obtain a genetic sample from Renshu and bring it back. The Tleilaxu seek to create their own Kwisatz Haderach and want to get their hands on Renshu. As repayment, she can promise to return the favor. And if they agree to hand Renshu over, she could make much larger assurances. But the Face Dancer is not a Bene Gesserit, which means Fortuna could renege on her word, or she could lure the characters into greater danger by keeping it.

The Bene Gesserit Sisterhood has detailed genetic records on every noble within the Landsraad. A Bene Gesserit agent requesting a genetic sample should tip off a Bene Gesserit player character that something is very wrong. She could **Understand** (Average, D1) this forewarning, especially if she has a focus in deductive reasoning, genetics, or the appropriate Faction Lore.





# ACT III: A LIFE OF PURPOSE

The player characters return to the community in time to meet Renshu, who has returned from the desert with his entourage of armed guards. A crowd forms around him as he enters the neighborhood enclave. He is gentle and genuine with each person. Some call him Renshu. Others refer to him as Mahdi, prophet, or umma, a term used within the Imperium for any 'wild' person given to fanatical prediction. However, the followers say it with great respect. When Renshu sees the player characters, his face lights up with an easy smile. After all, he has been expecting them.

Like the fabled Count Hasimir Fenring, Renshu is a might-have-been, an almost Kwisatz Haderach, and incredibly gifted. But while Fenring's abilities lean toward furtiveness and violence, Renshu was born with insight and boundless empathy. With excessive spice consumption, he has honed his gift for limited prophetic vision into an uncanny ability to read and influence people. It is as if he can see into someone's heart and provide what it is missing.

Use this when possible to bring a player character's backstory into the scene. What does each character long for? Acceptance? Success? Revenge? What secrets does a character keep? How does that shape who they are? With his ability to see small flashes in time, Renshu can access these personal needs and wants. They should be enough to convince player characters Renshu's prophetic powers are bona fide.

- ❖ If the character feels abandoned or orphaned, Renshu might offer the character comfort because "Children are not responsible for the deaths of their parents."
- ❖ Guilt or shame for a past mistake may haunt someone. Renshu understands what it is to be a "Before-you" and an "After-you" and guides the character toward acceptance.
- ❖ Suppose revenge drives a character. Renshu might warn, "Even after you kill the people who betrayed you, you will always be hungry." For him, forgiveness is the answer to wrath.
- ❖ If there is lingering unfinished business, Renshu can instruct them to see to it. "Have you ever been to the Municipal Museum on Poritrin? It holds answers."

In an informal, impromptu sermon, Renshu preaches on fate and free will. He knows why the characters are in Onn and offers them no ill will for what may yet happen.

*"Friends. My dear mother has hired our guests to take me home." Voices in the crowd rise in distress, but Renshu lifts a hand to calm them. "Unfortunately, I must politely refuse. We have not yet finished our work."*

*The crowd cheers and chants, "Mahdi! Mahdi! Mahdi!"*

*"Don't judge them," he says. And as he speaks, his followers quiet. "They pursue a future they do not know and cannot change. We are each bound by our fate. But we still have a choice, do we not?"*

*A follower shouts, "Yes."*

*Another calls out, "We always have a choice."*

*Renshu nods. "How many times have we seen those who attempt to hide or avoid fate learn it was their very actions that caused the foretold future? What if they had instead embraced destiny and lived without fear or regret?"*

*"While we may only be small pieces in a much larger plan, we all have a role." He inclines his head toward the player characters. "Even our guests are part of that plan. They are acting as fate dictates. As one of the many roads leading to a single destination. And so, we cannot judge them too harshly for what will transpire. Instead of behaving as prisoners of the future, what will we be?"*

*"Partners with destiny!" The crowd shouts in chorus.*

*"And in the interim, we will continue to help our neighbors while giving voice to the voiceless. We will challenge the siridar governor and bring rights and decency to the people. Regardless of the dangers that lay ahead, we will stand against tyranny!"*

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF RENSHU

Renshu adheres to the philosophy of Determinism. The spice melange has imparted snippets of future events, and he believes that nothing will change the course of time. But rather than become complacent or try to stop it, Renshu embraces it. He encourages his flock to live true to themselves and actively participate in their shared destiny. By helping others and combating injustice, they are not fighting against the future but helping fulfill it.



## RENSHU, PROPHET AND HEIR TO HOUSE MASCARO

### NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Most young nobles are bred to one day take over their Houses' domain. Their education includes learning the history of the Imperium, social etiquette rules, public oration, and how to dodge the occasional blade from an assassin. Renshu, as the sole heir to House Mascaro, was no exception. But rumors suggest his mother, Nayeli, was too lenient. The Count could be dictatorial, and she may have overcorrected in the freedoms she allowed.

Therefore, when House Mascaro relocated to Arrakis, Renshu's adventures came as no surprise. He attended the festivities of aristocracy, but he also ventured onto the streets of Arrakeen. He thrived in bars and brothels, earning a reputation as a rake while consuming heavy amounts of spice. It was his nightly routine until Renshu Mascaro began to see signs.

His first vision came in a dream. Strangers surrounded him, and Renshu recognized these strangers as friends. A rust-colored mixture of sand, spice, and blood covered their faces and caked their clothing. Using his own fine, noble linen and water stores, he wiped clean their closed eyes. And when they opened them, their eyes were blue-within-blue. Renshu understood this was more than a spice-induced fever dream, but a future sure to happen.

Renshu transformed from libertine to prophetic figure. He 'borrowed' four hundred literjons of water from House Mascaro's reservoir and, along with a group of street friends from Arrakeen, relocated to the nearby village of Onn. On the same day as their arrival, an ornithopter crashed in a residential neighborhood. It was a gruesome scene with many wounded and more dead. While his friends handed out water to the victims, Renshu used his clothes as rags to wash the blood from their eyes. The sand, blood, and spice left rust-colored stains on the clothing.

Remembering his vision, he committed to restoring the neighborhood, which has since become his commune. Today, Renshu is the calm shelter amid a brewing sandstorm. Embracing his fate, he leads with compassion and empathy, doing his best to aid those less privileged than himself. And when he speaks to someone, his attention never waivers.

DRIVE	STATEMENT
DUTY: 3	
FAITH: 7	I will embrace my fate.
JUSTICE: 5	
POWER: 4	
TRUTH: 6	The present and future are the same.
SKILL	FOCUSES
BATTLE: 5	
COMMUNICATE: 8	Charm, Empathy, Persuasion
DISCIPLINE: 4	
MOVE: 5	
UNDERSTAND: 5	

**Traits:** Prophet, Noble

### TALENTS:

- ❖ **Passive Scrutiny:** When Renshu enters a scene, he may know one piece of personal information as if he'd spent Threat to Obtain Information.
- ❖ **Stirring Rhetoric:** When Renshu succeeds at a Communicate test to address a group, select a number of those people equal to his Communicate skill. They may re-roll a single d20 on their next test that aligns with the drive used on Renshu's Communicate test.
- ❖ **Limited Prophetic Vision:** Renshu's ability to foresee only grants him glimpses and incomplete visions of the future. What he sees is at the gamemaster's discretion.

**Assets:** Jubba Cloak, Kindjal, Spice



Unfortunately, Renshu's prophetic visions are incomplete. Some have yet to occur or lack context. Others are prone to wild interpretation. For example, Renshu knows his mother hired the player characters to bring him home, but he does not know if they will be successful. Playing this type of character can be challenging for a gamemaster, so when in doubt, use a quote to fill the gap.

## THE GOSPEL OF RENSHU

"To see the future is to look through a keyhole. You can see a small piece of it but are blind to the rest of the room. Only after you have committed yourself and entered the room can you see everything in it. But by then, it is too late. You are already there and must contend with whatever awaits you."

"Once upon a time, a man walking in the market saw the figure of Death. Death beckoned to the man. Naturally terrified, the man fled. He mounted a horse and raced five hundred miles away to the city of Samarra. He rented a room, and later that evening, Death knocked on the door. The man was both confused and afraid. 'Why did you beckon me in the market earlier today?' asked the man. 'I did not,' responded Death. 'I was simply surprised to see you there. For here, tonight, in this room, was always our intended appointment.'"

"Time is deterministic. What has happened, what is happening now, and what will happen is like a flowing river. Do you think you chose to help my mother? Do you think you chose to travel to Onn? No. You made no decisions. Free will is an illusion. But that is not an excuse to let the currents of time drown you. Instead, let faith be a boat reminding you the future is unfolding as it should."

"I have seen glimpses of the future. In my dreams, I see a torn tapestry of elusive fragments sewn together with spice. A pillar of fire in the heart of Arrakeen. A great war in the desert. A blind kangaroo mouse racing across the crest of a dune. A fleet of Guild ships in orbit. A woman giving birth to a sandworm. These are a few of the visions fate has granted me."

## A TEST OF FATE

After player characters speak with Renshu, Barca, his bodyguard, threatens them. He had been listening quietly, but his innate distrust overwhelms him, and he questions their intentions. He calls the characters deceitful liars. While Renshu may be forgiving in the face of potential betrayal, Barca is not. The guard draws his weapon and challenges a player character to a duel.

Renshu allows the confrontation to play out, considering this a test of fate. How player characters deal with Barca is essential. If they fight the guard and win, Renshu applauds them for passing his trial, even if it results in Barca's Death. After all, the Mahdi inspires a violent revolution, and they need skilled warriors in the

nights ahead. If Barca wins the contest, Renshu calls off his guard before the killing blow, declaring the player characters have faced death with courage.

Player characters can also choose to disarm Barca or convince him of their noble intentions. If they successfully diffuse the situation, Renshu applauds their restraint, calling for peace and no repercussions. No matter the outcome, the gamemaster can play the scene as if Renshu already foresaw how it would end. And if the gamemaster is concerned Barca might win the contest, he can challenge multiple player characters simultaneously rather than a single individual.

The conflict with Barca can be a full Duel, or you might use simple skill tests to determine the outcome.

- ❖ Win a daunting (D3) **Battle** test to defeat Barca in single combat.
- ❖ Persuade or deceive Barca with a challenging (D2) **Communicate** test, convincing him the characters' intentions are not hostile.
- ❖ Scare Barca into backing down with a dire (D4) **Discipline** test.
- ❖ Dodge Barca's attacks with a daunting (D3) **Move** test, eventually wearing him down.

## BLESSINGS AND VISIONS

Renshu invites the player characters to join him as his guests at a celebration welcoming him home from his spiritual quest in the desert. After the sun sets or later that evening, many followers collect in a modest home and spill over into adjacent apartments. Most have brought a dish to pass as they share a meal.

While the community shows deference to Renshu and his guests, the player characters, it is not a formal dinner or feast. People take turns eating at different times. They walk around visiting with each other and exchanging tastes of what they brought with them. It feels more like a family reunion than a religious rite. While the food is simple, relying primarily on local staples, each is laden with spice.

Eventually, Renshu has a ceremonial clay bowl brought to him. The liquid inside steams even in the desert heat, and the smell of spice coffee fills the space. Renshu raises the bowl to the player character to bind their newfound friendship, offers a short blessing, and takes a drink. He then passes it on to the characters to drink with him.

If the characters have had spice coffee before, this might be the equivalent of spice espresso. The robust, cinnamon-like aroma opens the sinuses and burns the throat leaving behind a pleasant tingling sensation. The earthy concoction tastes like the desert smells.

Drinking from the bowl causes powerful hallucinations, creating an opportunity for the gamemaster to insert



## BARCA, HONOR GUARD

### NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Like so many mercenaries, competing Houses and interests drew Barca to Arrakis. The need for muscle promised a steady income, and he found employment within House Mascaró. He and Renshu became fast friends, and he often joined him in his carousing until he found love in a brothel. His name was Hasani, and he stole Barca's heart along with his good sense.

Hasani had an "ingenious plan" to rob one of his regulars—an inspector at the spaceport who earned large sums from bribes. Not only did he have so much money he probably wouldn't notice any of it missing, but he also obtained it illegally. So even if he did notice, he couldn't go to the authorities. The plan was to steal the money, use it to book passage offworld, and find somewhere to live that wasn't a desert wasteland. It was supposed to be easy.

Stealing the solaris was easy. Getting away with it was hard. Hasani managed to slip away, but authorities arrested Barca. Thankfully, Renshu got the charges dropped. It was hard to accuse Barca of theft when the inspector could not claim the income.

Barca has not seen Hasani since. To this day, Barca does not know if it was terrible timing or betrayal that resulted in his arrest. He hopes it's the former but knows it could also be the latter. So Barca swore his loyalty to Renshu to pay back the political capital the noble spent on his behalf. Since then, the community built around Renshu has become a new life and a newfound purpose.

If this is his fate, then regardless of Hasani's part in his arrest, it was what was supposed to happen. It was inevitable. This peace gives Barca the ability to wish Hasani well, wherever he may be.

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	7	My life for Renshu.
FAITH:	5	
JUSTICE:	6	A man's word is his bond.
POWER:	4	
TRUTH:	3	

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	7	Dueling
COMMUNICATE:	5	Intimidation
DISCIPLINE:	4	
MOVE:	6	Swift
UNDERSTAND:	4	

**Traits:** Bodyguard, Loyal

### TALENTS:

- ☞ **Bold (Battle):** Barca may re-roll a d20 gained from spending Threat on a Battle skill test.
- ☞ **Unquestionable Loyalty:** At the start of each adventure, Barca begins with 3 Threat, which only he may use, and which may only be used on actions in direct service to Renshu.

**Assets:** Long Blade, Short Blade, Stillsuit

visions of things they might want to implement in future adventures. The gamemaster can also have the players choose a memory from their characters' pasts to relive. Or the gamemaster may include vague images from the *Dune* novels, such as the Atreides on Arrakis, Fremen riding sandworms, the eruption of a stone burner in the middle of Arrakeen, etc.

Anyone taking a drink spends 3 hours weaving in and out of lucidity, followed by 6 hours of deep sleep. Renshu enjoys the hallucinations and engages with his flock before retiring for the evening. His guards do not partake in the ritual, choosing instead to protect the Mahdi.

Player characters can also refuse the drink. Sober characters can enjoy the party, mingle with some of Renshu's

followers, learn more about the leader, or use it to gather more intelligence. This is the best time to collect Renshu's genetic material or kidnap him. Reduce the number of followers who would usually attack or chase the player characters by half.

Mechanically speaking, ingesting the concoction grants the user the 'Confused,' 'Hallucinatory,' and 'Vague' Complications. Purchasing Threat does not buy off these Complications. A successful dire (D4) Understand test mitigates the effects so long as the individual administering treatment has an appropriate focus like poison or psychiatry. The gamemaster is the final arbiter on what is and is not an appropriate focus. Once mitigated, the player can buy off each Complication by adding 2 Threat.



# ACT IV: NO CHOICE IS AN OPTION

Once the characters recover from their spice hangover and regroup, they need to decide what to do with Renshu. There is no perfect ending. There is no right or wrong. Hopefully, the decision reflects the attitudes, ethics, and ambitions of the characters.

Convincing Renshu to abandon his people proves fruitless. While the players may present ideas that change how the story ends, there are three likely solutions.

## LEAVING WELL ENOUGH ALONE

Allowing Renshu to stay with the cult breaks their word to Lady Mascaro, severing the alliance. This is not necessarily a nonstarter if they can convince their House ruler it is the right thing to do, and they accept the need to find new supply chains.

They could mitigate the consequences by warning Lady Mascaro of the Bene Gesserit plot against Renshu. In this scenario, Lady Mascaro might recognize the good faith effort and soften her stance. If player characters can convince Lady Mascaro to come to the compound to meet with her son, reconciliation may also be possible.

If Renshu remains with his cult, reward player characters with his followers as an earned ally and any appropriate military and combat-related Assets.

## BITTER REUNION

Removing Renshu from his flock by kidnapping or other avenues means making an enemy of the cult. But by returning him to his mother and keeping their word to Lady Mascaro, the alliance between the two Houses strengthens. Lady Mascaro rewards player characters with access to financial resources and industrial Assets.

## OH, FORTUNA

Handing Renshu to the Bene Gesserit makes an enemy of both the cult and Lady Mascaro. But it also comes with a more potent reward. They will gain the favors Fortuna agreed to and perhaps earn her as a reliable Bene Gesserit contact giving them access to espionage Assets, which includes access to intelligence on the Houses of the Landsraad and reveal secret plots against the player characters.

Player characters can still salvage the relationship with the Sisterhood if they leave Renshu with his people or return him to his mother. Fortuna will keep her word and grant a single favor if they provide her detailed intelligence on Renshu and his followers.

## WHAT ABOUT THE FREMEN?

If the gamemaster implements the optional Fremen complication, the Fremen maintain their neutrality. If Renshu remains with his community, the Fremen continue to watch and note how the player characters did not interfere with their plans.

If player characters rip Renshu from his people, this may convince the Fremen that Renshu is not the Mahdi. But the Fremen note the player characters have complicated their agenda. Depending on the ties the player characters have, maybe this sours the relationship, or Fremen player characters may negotiate a resolution or repay the debt.



## WHAT ABOUT THE TLEILAXU FACE DANCER?

If player characters do not reveal the Tleilaxu Face Dancer, they maintain their cover as a Bene Gesserit. The player characters hand over the intelligence on Renshu, and 'Fortuna' uses the information to continue hunting the prophet. But if player characters hand over Renshu, then the Face Dancer escapes to Arrakeen, or perhaps offworld, with their prize. Obviously, in either scenario, no favors are granted by the Sisterhood.

On the other hand, if player characters realize Fortuna is not who she says, they can lay a trap for the Face Dancer. They can establish a rendezvous and confront her. The infiltrator fights the player characters or runs. If captured, the Face Dancer reveals the Tleilaxu plot against Renshu, which both Lady Mascaro and the Bene Gesserit will appreciate. The gamemaster can also tie villains they already have in play to the Tleilaxu. However, if the gamemaster is concerned a captured Face Dancer might reveal too much information, the agent can bite down on a poison tooth.

Guidelines for advancement points are in **Chapter 4** p.139 of the **Core Rulebook**. Grant a bonus point if Renshu survived the adventure and an additional point if Lady Mascaro remained an ally of the House.



# CONCLUSION

Renshu cannot be carved up and divvied out to all participating interests, meaning some people will be satisfied and others aggrieved. With player characters at the center of this web, the responsibility and blame for Renshu's fate falls on them. So, while they may end the story having made friends and powerful allies, they may have also earned rivals and enemies. Use these adventure seeds to continue the story and build on those relationships.

- ❖ As Renshu's cult grows, so too do concerns among the Fremen. Eventually, Fremen envoys challenge Renshu, demanding he either renounce his claim as the Mahdi or take the Water of Life to prove his legitimacy. If Renshu agrees, he asks the player characters to escort him to the desert. There, Renshu takes the Water of Life and, like so many before him, dies. Player characters soon find themselves in the middle of a feud between his followers. Alternatively, Renshu can refuse the Fremen and flee to the player characters in search of protection. This might be due to him seeing a vision of his death if he takes the Water of Life.
- ❖ If Barca survives his duel with the player characters, he asks them for help in locating his former lover, Hasani. He shares his story and wants to know the truth. Was their relationship real, or was he a mark? Player characters track Hasani to Carthag, where he's changed his name to Idris Qadir and runs confidence schemes for a small crew of thieves. At first glance, it appears Barca was a mark. But, as the characters learn more, they discover Hasani is indebted to and works for a criminal kingpin.
- ❖ Unable to pacify Lady Nayeli, she vows revenge on the player character's House for not fulfilling the debt by bringing her son home. Shortly after, the social shunning begins. The hosts of an upcoming reception for a visiting dignitary revoke the House's invitation to attend. Supply lines dry up as it becomes harder to find production resources and replacement parts for broken machinery. The cause may be plain, but the solution less so. Does the House attempt to repair the rift between them and House Mascaro? Do they retaliate by convincing their allies to meet a social snub with one snub of their own? Or do the player characters turn to House Mascaro's enemies to make a deal?





