

DUNE.

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Though our story takes place in the distant future, dates are never explicitly stated. This outline is thick with terminology, but the film should transmit many of the ideas visually rather than by overloading us with names.

PART I

THE SPICE

We open with a fast-paced, visually exciting montage clarifying the history and origin of the most valuable substance in the universe: THE SPICE MELANGE. The key to faster-than-light travel, the Spice is the only substance that allows ships to move freely from planet to planet. As a result it's become the cornerstone of a vast interstellar economy. The Spice has fueled wars, helped build empires, and helped destroy them.

We see the Spice is found on one tiny planet: the wasteland ARRAKIS (Dune). We follow the Spice as it's mined in the deserts, changes hands through various mercantile groups, and ends in the engine of an imperial freighter where it's used to 'fold' space, creating a wormhole that allows the massive supply ship to jump from one end of the galaxy to another. The Spice itself—dull rust-colored powder—should feel like a character on its own, a source of power and corruption.

We establish that our world is essentially a feudal system in space. Noble houses vie for power under an unstable Emperor. Our story centers on two houses—THE ATREIDES and THE HARKONNENS—families engaged in a long and bloody feud over the Spice. The story begins when, in an attempt to end the feud, THE EMPEROR has decreed that the Harkonnens must give control of Dune to House Atreides. After centuries the bloodshed is coming to an end; we're about to enter a time of peace.

Or so one would think...

OUTPOST

Dune. A handful of haggard Atreides soldiers are stationed in a small outpost on the edge of the desert. The outpost establishes the grounded, gritty feel of Dune. This is a world where exciting science-fiction technology exists, but most of it has been worn down by violent sandstorms and winds strong enough to break the sound barrier.

The soldiers currently await the arrival of House Atreides. Working-class dialog. They're taking the Harkonnen crests off the chairs when they see what appears to be a mirage: a whip-thin stranger wandering through the uncharted desert alone. They let him inside. As the soldiers attempt to send out a distress signal, the stranger pulls coils of garrote from his stringy hair and within seconds kills nearly everyone in the outpost.

He doesn't fight like a Harkonnen, the stranger's identity remains a mystery. We see only that he seems to enjoy killing, operating in complete silence with a chilling stare on his face. The stranger gives a signal, and five similarly-dressed men appear from beyond the dunes. None of them notice the last of the Atrides' soldiers has escaped, fleeing over the desert on a battered speeder. We're not sure what just happened exactly, but one thing is certain: doom is coming for House Atrides.

PAUL

Caladan. In contrast to Dune, the Atrides' home planet is a lush paradise. Waterfalls, oceans, grasslands. The Atrides live in a massive estate carved into cliffs overlooking the sea. Tonight is the official ceremony where the Emperor will hand Dune over to the Atrides family; it will also be the first time the Harkonnens and the Atrides have been in the same room together in years.

Our central protagonist is PAUL ATREDIES (18). When we first see him, he's taking lessons from royal instructor YUEH. Paul's learning everything required of a duke's son: how to bow, how to address visiting nobility. None of it suits him.

Paul hates the propriety. He's anxious about the move to Dune and asks questions about the planet's SANDWORMS—the monsters that swim under the deserts. Before Yueh can answer, Paul's father, DUKE LETO ATREIDES, enters.

A large part of Paul's training is learning how to fight. Paul and his father spar with knives and body-shields. This is playful; there's real warmth between them. There's also some sort of mysticism at play in their fighting, much of it revolves around the elimination of fear. Though Paul is strong for his age, he's undeveloped in his technique and still a little afraid of his father. Paul's not ready and ultimately Leto bests him.

As soon as they're finished, the men put on proper attire; the guests are arriving.

DINNER PARTY

This sequence is an amalgamation of several scenes in Book One of the novel. An elaborate, Gatsbyesque affair complete with family drama and visual pyrotechnics, the party is reminiscent of the opening scene from The Godfather. This sequence gives us our entire world, simplifies our plot, and puts most of our characters in one setting.

Much of the interaction should suggest royalty in this society is disciplined to the point of repression. A subtle gesture of the hand can betray a guest's true intentions.

We see everything through Paul's eyes. He's being groomed, constantly tested by his father. Paul's sharp, able to pick up on subtle details in the character of their guests. Paul can watch a man's gait and tell if he's had military training. He can observe how a servant wears her outfit and deduce where she was born. It's clear Paul would make a fine Duke if he had any interest in it.

Paul doesn't connect to the royal women, especially the Emperor's daughter, IRULAN. Though Leto encourages Paul to talk to her, Irulan chides Paul for not observing some arcane royal custom. He's embarrassed, talks back to her sharply. Leto himself seems politically savvy, assuring the guests—many of whom rely on Dune's Spice mining operations—that he won't disrupt the economy.

We meet the antagonists, BARON HARKONNEN and his nephew FEYD (18) who's being groomed just as Paul is. Though presently they're smiling in the face of the

Atreides, the tension escalates from the moment they arrive. There is an air of paranoia, both families have brought armed guards and hidden poison-testers. Words carry barbs. It's clear too that the other Houses are wary of the Emperor; they'd prefer if Leto sat on the throne.

Paul's mother, JESSICA, is a member of the BENE GESSERIT SISTERHOOD and possesses strange powers that we glimpse briefly at the party (think a female Jedi). As the Emperor gives a speech claiming to be happy the feud has ended, Jessica can literally hear his heart beating too-fast in his chest. She knows he's lying, and suspects that they're walking into a trap. When she voices her concerns, Leto assures her that the best way to handle a trap is to face it head on and with eyes open.

Jessica is Leto's concubine, and she has to watch Leto flirt with other women. She knows Leto must remain open to marriage to other houses so the Atreides name can remain strong. It's bittersweet, and we empathize with Jessica.

Off in one corridor, Paul overhears his mother talking to another member of the Sisterhood, the REVEREND MOTHER, an old crone who's been watching Paul eerily throughout the party. They're talking about Paul, using words he doesn't understand. Paul doesn't understand, and Jessica is cryptic in her explanation. We get the sense too that Jessica is somewhat controlling of Paul.¹

DOUBLE-CROSS

Giedi Prime. On the Harkonnens' home planet, the Baron holds a secret meeting with the Emperor.

Reveal: The Baron and the Emperor are in league together, plotting to destroy Leto under the illusion of truce. In truth, the Emperor thinks Leto has gotten too powerful; the Atreides are a threat to the throne. Even now, the Emperor's guardsmen—THE SARDAUKAR, the most vicious fighting force in the Universe—are moving closer and closer to the Atreides' new home on Dune (this clarifies the attack on the outpost).

The Baron agrees that while Leto may suspect the attack, there exists one piece of the subterfuge that Leto is unaware of. The Baron won't explain, though we see he's holding an UNNAMED WOMAN in a strange suspended animation. At the end of the scene, we learn the depths of the Baron's duplicity: he's been recording their conversation with a strange listening device.

Baron: 'Plans within plans within plans'...

ARRIVAL ON DUNE

Before arriving on Arrakis, Paul has a strange, vivid dream where he sees the face of a woman with eyes stained deep blue. Paul wakes up to find they're flying into ARRAKEEN, the capital city of Dune. There's an ominous message written on the tarmac: "*O you who know what we suffer here, do not forget us in your prayers.*"

Arrakeen is beautiful but poverty stricken, a city revolving solely around the flow of water. People sell it, fight over it in the streets. It has the feel of a Third World country several hundred years in the future. A mix of despair and dilapidated technology.

¹ *The Gom Jabbar test—if we decide to include it—should go here. If it is included, I want to make sure it's not quite as vague as it is in the novel.*

Paul sees an old Harkonnen flyer showing the face of a man whose eyes are stained blue. He's wanted for attacking Spice manufacturing plants. The man is a FREMEN raider named STIL, a Dune native who lives out in the deep deserts. Is the woman from Paul's dream a Fremmen?

As the Atrides move towards the governor's palace, no one notices the Sardaukar watching ominously from nearby rooftops. They're preparing nasty looking weapons, readying for an attack.

In the palace, workmen take down the Harkonnen crests, put up the Atrides'. From the moment she enters the palace, Jessica can feel death approaching. She's disgusted to find that the Baron has actually built a bathing pool inside the palace. The cost of running it exceeds the salaries of a thousand men. Jessica's first order of business is to drain it. She won't stand for the wasteful customs of the Harkonnens.

WAR ROOM

There are innumerable issues—political, economical, ecological—that must be addressed on Dune. This scene plays out like a briefing from The West Wing, with Leto and Paul cutting through new business. Paul has a good mind for politics and offers a wise suggestion on how to deal with smugglers.

We hear more about the Fremmen. People are scared of them, call them religious fanatics who drink the blood of their dead. Though they've been attacking Harkonnen mining operations, Leto is sure they can be reasoned with. He sends out weapons-master DUNCAN IDAHO to make peace.²

The last order of business: reports suggest that the Harkonnens have left them with substandard mining equipment. Leto asks to see the Spice mining operations personally. Before they leave, Paul sees a map showing the locations of all their spice reserves and weapons caches.

SPICE MINING

Leto, Paul and their men fly out into the desert in a broken-down 'thopter—which I'd like to reinvent as a hybrid helicopter/ATV that can both fly and drive across the desert with tank treads.

They quickly find the mining operation in shambles. Men are dying in accidents, safety regulations aren't maintained, sandstorms chew up everything. The spice harvester is an amazing setpiece we'll see again: a factory on massive insectile legs that crawls over the desert.

Before we see too much of the crawler, the men spot a sandworm moving through the deserts nearby. Our sandworms should be terrifyingly quick, their chitinous flesh teeming with parasites. This one bucks through the dunes, screeching as it crests over the sand. The crawler is supposed to be able to evade the worm, but its defenses have been tampered with by the Harkonnens. The sandworm attacks, threatening the lives of all the men and a large haul of Spice.

² *I'd like to merge Duncan and Gurney into one character.*

Leto doesn't care about the Spice, he's concerned only for his men. They take off just in time for the massive worm to devour the Spice harvester whole. Paul is blown away by the sheer size of the creature, though he's assured it's only a baby.

THE TRAITOR

While Paul and Leto are away, the survivor from the Atrides outpost stumbles into the palace, dying of thirst. He's found by Yueh, Paul's teacher. Yueh gives the soldier a drink, listens as the man explains that the Harkonnens are about to attack, the truce is a sham. The emperor is using his own troops to murder the Atrides family.

Yueh: 'Who have you told about this?'

Soldier: 'no one.'

Without a word, Yueh pulls out a knife and stabs the soldier through the heart. Yueh is a Harkonnen agent. This is the final piece of the Baron's plan.

DOWNFALL

That night, the buildup of violence comes to a head. While the Atrides family sleeps, Yueh sneaks into the basement and shuts off the palace's shield generators, allowing the Imperial Guards to enter. This sequence plays out like a terrifying home invasion. Gunfights, frightening technology, dozens of deaths.

The Sardaukar tear through the palace like animals, killing anyone in their way. Leto blockades Paul and Jessica in one of the bedrooms, tells them they should flee to the desert to try to reach Duncan. Quickly the Duke is struck down by Yueh, who paralyzes him with a stunner pistol.

Yueh apologizes to Leto, saying the Baron put him in an impossible position, holding his wife hostage in exchange for service (clarifying the woman held in suspended animation). Yueh puts a poison capsule in Leto's mouth, tells him to bite down on it when he sees Baron Harkonnen. It will kill Leto, but it may also kill the Baron.

Paul and Jessica have an altercation with several guards where Jessica reveals more of the Sisterhood's powers. By lowering the pitch of her voice, she commands the guards to kill each other. Paul stares at his mother, unsure what to think. Is she a witch? There's no time for questions, and Part I ends with Paul and Jessica on the run.

PART II

'THOPTER CHASE

Paul and Jessica board a 'thopter and take off towards the desert with the Sardaukar in pursuit. Here we get a tense chase sequence full of unique action. It begins with Paul avoiding fire in an air chase over the city of Arrakeen; he then activates the thopter's treads, dives down onto the winding streets where he's pursued through the twisting alleys (Think Star Wars by way of Bourne). Paul's a reckless but skilled pilot and loses their pursuers outside the city walls.

THE DUKE'S DEATH

Before his death, Leto has a vision of the endless sea on Caladan. He's torn from his drugged reverie, realizes he's surrounded by Baron Harkonnen and Feyd. The bulk of this scene plays out from Leto's POV. We hear his heavy wheezing, see his disorientation as we wait for him to use the poison capsule. As Leto bites down on the capsule, we don't know who's been hit. When the dust settles, Baron Harkonnen is still alive, Leto has managed only to kill his aides. In the aftermath, the Baron personally kills Yueh.

BARON: "Never trust a traitor. Even one you create yourself."

The sequence ends as the Baron orders his men to remove the Atreides crests from the walls, put the Harkonnen crests back in their place. He asks too that they refill his bathing pool.

ALONE IN THE DESERT

Paul and Jessica awake in the desert. They've pitched a tent to use during the day since they have no protection from the sun. Inside, Paul has more strange visions. He looks haunted and knows somehow that his mother is pregnant with another child, a girl. As we see Paul's powers begin to emerge, we should get the sense that they're uncontrollable, striking without warning. They're almost a metaphor for puberty, his transition into manhood. We empathize with him because he's frequently confused and thinks his abilities make him a freak.

Paul eventually starts crying, and Jessica assumes the tears are over the death of Leto. Paul says no, he's crying because he's *not* upset. He feels not sadness but purpose, and this scares the hell out of him. Jessica tries to comfort him, but it does little good. Paul is quickly changing, hardening. We can tell Jessica knows something, but she keeps silent.

THE FREE MEN OF ARRAKIS

As Paul and Jessica move through the desert, Paul is overcome by a sense of familiarity. He can almost read the sand, knows where they can hide. He also has an eerie feeling that they're being watched.

There are myriad dangers in the desert, including a horrible wormlike insect—nearly the size of a man—that can both swim through the sand and walk around on the surface like an arachnid (this creature comes into play later). We get the sense there's an entire ecosystem below their feet, as if Paul and Jessica are walking on the surface of a vast ocean.

Eventually they're circled by carrion-eaters, great skeletal birds that live off of blood. The birds are spotted by the Sardaukar, who pursue above in 'thopters. Paul and Jessica rush into a mountain cave, reach a dead end. The cave seems oddly lived-in. Plant roots hang from the ceiling, harvesting machines suck droplets of water from them.

As Paul and Jessica ready themselves to fight, the Sardaukar are struck down by unseen assailants. As fiercely as the Imperial guards fight, they're cut to pieces by these attackers, who come out of the shadows with unimaginable speed. One of the strangers pulls back a hood to reveal his blue stained eyes. They're Fremen.

Most of the Fremen speak a native hunting language (Chakobsa), and Paul and Jessica have trouble communicating with them. The only Fremen that can communicate adequately are STIL, the camp leader (Paul saw his picture in Arrakeen) and CHANI, the woman from Paul's dream.

Though there's an initial scuffle with JAMIS, Chani's young zealot husband, the Fremen quickly realize that they all share a common enemy in the Harkonnens. They tentatively take Paul and Jessica in.

CITY OF STONE

Paul and Jessica are brought back to the Fremen camp, an entire city carved out of the inside of a mountain. We have some amazing world-building here. As Paul descends stone walkways lower and lower into the Fremen camp, he sees that these people have a far richer culture than Leto suspected.

Our Fremen should feel a bit less primitive than they do in the novel. They use sheets of charged particles to harvest water from the desert air, turbines to harness the power of Dune's supersonic winds. Their city is a mishmash of sandblasted dwellings jerry-rigged with rugged alien technology.

Revolving solely around survival in the desert, the Fremen are also incredibly tough fighters. Even the children are taught how to kill using knives carved from the teeth of sandworms. Jessica marvels that the Sisterhood's missionaries have planted folklore even here; the camp has its own Reverend Mother.

Jamis distrusts Paul from the beginning and acts as a minor antagonist. He's intolerant of anyone not *'of the sand'* and dislikes the odd glances Paul gives Chani.

Paul and Jessica are taken to makeshift quarters. The Spice is in everything on Dune, including Fremen food. When Paul first consumes the Spice, his visions become more vivid, intense. Brief scenes, voices tear through his mind. He has one where Chani stands before him completely naked and ashamed. Is it a fantasy or a vision of the future?

THE FIRST RAID

The following night the Fremen have planned a raid on a Spice harvester, and Paul insists on joining them. Before they leave, we learn about STILLSUITS, the protective outfits the Fremen use to capture and reclaim the body's water. We see too the Fremen have various weapons at their disposal: blasters stolen from the Harkonnens and chemical explosives made from the Spice.

Many scenes from Part I should have mirror images in Parts II & III, making our story feel symmetrical in setup and payoff. In this way we show how Paul circuitously becomes his father (the inescapability of identity is a major theme). The first of those mirror images is here, when the Fremen mount their attack on a Spice harvester.

Paul sees immediately that his new companions are savage fighters; even the old men seem indestructible. Chani fights alongside them, an equal match to any of the men. In the middle of the attack, Paul comes face-to-face with one of his father's workmen, a Spice-miner whom Leto saved earlier and now works for the Harkonnens. Standing before him with a knife in his hand, Paul can't kill him. As the man raises his pistol at Paul, Jamis kills the worker, calling Paul a coward.

GIFTS

The next morning, Paul makes amends by giving Stil a map: the locations of all the Harkonnen spice reserves, 'thopters, and arms caches. Paul saw it for a split second in the palace and was able to reconstruct it from memory. Stil is speechless. This is an unprecedented boon to their raids. When Paul asks Stil how many Fremen live in the desert, Stil replies with a number ten times higher than Paul expected. There's the potential for a real fighting force here.

Paul tells Stil that the only way they'll ever be able to match the Harkonnens is if all the Fremen are able to work together. Paul convinces Stil to send out messenger birds (desert hawks) to the neighboring camp, essentially a call to arms. Stil is skeptical, claims the other Fremen will never respond. Jamis grows more jealous as both Stil and Chani seem to be impressed with Paul.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Back in Arrakeen, the Baron invites members of the other Houses over to witness their family games. While Feyd fights in an arena, killing a Fremen warrior, we get more political interplay and reveal the extent of the Baron's duplicity.

The Baron has ulterior motives in bringing the Houses together. He goes behind the Emperor's back, playing the recording he made earlier to show the Emperor as weak-willed and singularly to blame for the fall of House Atreides. He needs to know if the other houses would support his play for the throne. Though the Harkonnens don't technically have royal blood, Feyd can marry the Emperor's daughter, Irulan, and the Harkonnens can take the throne by force. Irulan meanwhile is watching Feyd fight and is clearly turned-on by him.

Everyone knows the Emperor is weak, but the other Houses can't stand the Harkonnens. They miss Leto. The other Houses give their uneasy support, but tell the Baron he must wait to act. The dust has not yet settled with the Atreides affair.

The Baron receives word that another one of their crawlers has been destroyed by Fremen scum. The Baron considers the Fremen nothing but a nuisance, fringe religious fanatics at best.

PAUL'S FIRST MURDER

At the camp, Jamis sees the respect the Fremen start to give Paul. At last he calls Paul out, challenging him to fight in single combat. Stil and Jamis whisper to each other, speaking of the harsh price the camp will pay if Jamis loses. Jamis promises he won't lose.

The gritty Fremen fighting style is unfamiliar to Paul, and the elegant technique he's practiced only hinders him. The fight is a savage brawl that Paul must end by killing Jamis with his bare hands.

When Paul finishes the fight, he stands over Jamis's body and begins to weep. As one of the tears drips down onto Jamis's body, the other Fremen whisper to themselves. Paul is giving water to the dead, a sacred act. It makes him eerily beloved.

The murder disturbs Paul, hardens him. We realize quickly what Stil was worried about. Fremen traditionally settle disputes in combat, with the winner taking the loser's

position in the camp. Paul has unintentionally jumped up the Fremen pecking order, taking over Jamis's spot as second in command.

Jessica chastises Paul for what he's done, she's still somewhat controlling. She blames the incident on Paul's foolish desire for Chani. Paul lashes out at her, upset.

Chani arrives in Paul's quarters with all of Jamis's possessions, even the water reclaimed from his dead body. Everything now belongs to Paul. A moment later Chani appears before Paul completely naked, just as he envisioned earlier. Apparently she's his as well. Paul sees she's ashamed, wraps a blanket around Chani. He stays up all night, haunted by the murder and his burgeoning prescience.

ESCALATION

Stil and Paul are woken, told to arm themselves. Troops have been spotted on the horizon. As the Fremen ready themselves for a fight, they quickly realize that it's not the Sardaukar come to attack, it's the other Fremen camp. Paul is surprised to find a few members of the old Atreides clan with them, among them his old weapons master, Duncan, who was sent out earlier. A reunion follows, Duncan swears his allegiance to Paul.

This next section should play out in a semi-montage, showing the Fremen executing several raids on Harkonnen territories. We see the passage of time as Jessica's belly swells.

Here Paul becomes increasingly ambitious in his tactics and more fearless in battle. They hit Spice crawlers, garrisons, and factories where we'll see the mechanics of Spice manufacturing. Paul suggests the Fremen dress as Harkonnen workmen, using scleral shells to conceal their blue-stained eyes. Paul baits wells of Spice with explosive charges, causing crawlers to explode the moment they try to gather the Spice. He plants shield generators inside a Spice factory, drawing the worms up from the sand. We should have a sense of movement here. Many of our setpieces—oases, city slums, botanical testing stations—should feel like Lawrence of Arabia arched by science fiction.

As Paul's reputation grows, the Fremen quickly become better armed, stealing thopters and crates of armaments from the Harkonnens. Jessica meanwhile grows frightened that Paul's identifying too much with the Fremen. She worries he's becoming fanatical.

The Baron sees the Fremen are quickly becoming a problem. He's losing money on Spice and is forced to increase water taxes. The men and women of Arrakeen start to get restless, empathizing more with Paul and the Fremen. The Baron is further enraged when Paul sends several Harkonnen soldiers back dead, the water drained from their bodies. Included in the perverse gift, Paul sends a message demanding the Baron's unconditional surrender of the Spice and total withdraw from Arrakis. The Baron plots how to destroy Paul, ordering the Sardaukar to find Paul's camp and hit him at home.

LOVE STORY

As Paul has built up a name for himself, Chani has actually begun to fall in love with him. Here we get a bit of her backstory. She speaks English so well because, like Paul, her father was killed by the Harkonnens. He was an ecologist who wanted to

change the face of Dune, making it green and livable. She explains that this is the dream of every Fremen.

Strangely Paul knows things about Chani's past even before she's told him. Just before they kiss for the first time, he can hear her heart beating rapidly in her chest (just as Jessica did at the party). When Paul asks why her heart is beating so quickly:

CHANI: "*Because you frighten me.*"

When they make love for the first time, Paul's consciousness is accosted by images from Chani's life. We see little slivers of Chani's past, and we're able to learn who she is very quickly.

THE SPICE ESSENCE

The Fremen Reverend Mother passes away, and Jessica, who's been working in the hospital, is made into the new Reverend Mother. According to ancient custom, she must ingest the 'Spice Essence', highly concentrated Spice in the form of water. She's frightened, and Paul joins her in the ritual. They journey down into a chasm in the rock, where they catch a glimpse of the rich ecosystem under the sand.

We see the Spice is actually made by Sandworms (similar to the production of silk). Paul realizes that the hideous insect he saw on the surface of Dune was actually a Sandworm in its larval stage.

They both drink, and Paul has visions of two distinct possible futures. One is his own death by a Harkonnen blade; in the other he's commanding a massive army, waging the greatest war in the history of the Empire. He does not yet see how either tragedy can be avoided.

THE KWISATZ HADERACH

Part II ends when, in the aftermath of Paul's ingestion of the Spice Essence, Jessica finally reveals to Paul the secret she's been keeping. She tells him the Bene Gesserit have for centuries been engaged in a breeding program. The Sisterhood desired to create a man who would have all the powers of Bene Gesserit (called the Kwisatz Haderach). Jessica doesn't believe this is what Paul has become. It's folklore, she says. Instead she thinks the Spice has triggered some sort of horrible reaction inside Paul. She believes the Spice may have given Paul inhuman abilities but at the cost of his soul.

PART III

THE BIRTH OF ALIA

Part Three opens several months later with the birth of Paul's sister, ALIA. Chani, now pregnant with Paul's child, acts as a midwife. Though the birth seems relatively easy, there's something wrong: the baby isn't crying. She's not making a sound. Because Jessica has ingested so much Spice, the baby has the chilling blue-stained eyes of a Fremen. Though the child never speaks, Jessica can eerily hear the little girl's voice whispering in her head.

The Baron continues to have problems with Arrakeen. Without the flow of money from the Spice, the city is turning into a powder keg. People are beginning to riot, throwing bricks and stones at the Governor's palace.

DIPLOMATIC APPEAL

A man is brought into the Fremen camp, claiming he bears a message for Paul. He brings gifts from two of the minor houses. It's a request for a meeting. Paul and Stil suspect a trap, but Paul goes anyway. With Fremen guarding him, Paul sits down with the heads of the other Houses, the men who met with the Baron earlier. They tell Paul of the Harkonnen plans, how the Baron is likely going to have Feyd marry Irulan and take the throne. A dark cloud will fall over the Empire.

Paul doesn't care. The other houses claim they would back a play to let Paul take the throne. Atrides is the only name respected by all the other houses.

Paul: "I am not an Atrides."

THE OLD MAN OF THE DESERT

Paul identifies now more with the Fremen than with his own people, but there's one thing he still must do to fully become a Fremen. He must ride a sandworm. Stil takes him out into the deep desert, where at last we see 'the old man of the desert' the largest sandworm on Dune. Using grappling hooks, Paul begins to climb up the side when suddenly the unexpected happens.

He fails.

Paul's path to victory shouldn't feel as cut-and-dried as it does in the book. Here he fails just before making his final attack. In doing so, we make him more of an underdog rather than a god whose every word becomes prophecy. He should be able to ride worms in sequels, but not on his first attempt.

Paul's failure with the worm should be a bad omen. Though Stil says that most men fall their first time, some of the Fremen start to lose faith in him. Just then, a Fremen messenger approaches waving a kerchief. There's been an attack at the camp.

CAMP IN RUINS

Paul and Stil return to find that the Sardaukar struck without warning, killing hundreds of Fremen. Jessica and Alia were taken back to the Baron's palace in Arrakeen as bait to lure Paul out of his hole.

Paul maintains that they have to attack the Harkonnens now. In a scene that mirrors Leto's meeting in the War Room, Paul says he knows it's a trap; the best way to face it is head on. Though the Harkonnens still have no idea the full measure of the Fremen fighting force, the Fremen aren't yet ready for a massive assault. Stil thinks they move too quickly. Also, Paul shows signs of having ingested too much Spice. He hasn't slept in days, he has difficulty telling the difference between past and future. Though it seems like he's not in the best shape to fight, they execute the attack regardless.

CLIMAX

The final battle is a chaotic action sequence seen from multiple perspectives. It plays out through the city of Arrakeen and the Baron's palace under the cover of a massive sandstorm. Paul and the Fremen break through the shield generators with the power of the sandworms. Almost as soon as the fighting starts, the people of Arrakeen begin to riot, tearing towards the palace. The Baron throws everything he has at the invading forces, but even when Harkonnen soldiers blast a sandworm into bits, its ring segments continue to squirm, crushing everything in their path.

As the battle rages, ships from the other Houses appear out of folded space above. Soon every warship in the Universe is circling Arrakis, ready to defend the Spice. No one can afford to see the economy destroyed.

In the palace, Paul fights Feyd. Though Feyd doesn't fight fair, Paul kills him in single combat. The Baron meanwhile snatches up Alia and tries to escape. As he runs down dark corridors, he's haunted by an eerie whisper that seems to come at him from all corners of the room. Just as he realizes it's the voice of Alia, the little girl scratches him with a poisoned needle. In a spectacular death sequence, the baron falls backwards into his bathing pool just as the people of Arrakeen break into the governor's palace. Upon seeing the pool, the water-starved natives begin drinking the water with the Baron floating dead at the other end.

When the battle ends, Paul is technically in control of the Spice. The other houses send representatives down to speak with him, all guests we saw at the opening party sequence. The old Reverend Mother appears as well, now fawning over Paul, who she believes is the Kwisatz Haderach.

The Fremen are poised to keep fighting at Paul's command. If he continues fighting in an attempt to shut down Spice production, millions of lives will be lost in the largest battle in the history of the Empire. By now he's almost a zealot. He doesn't want to follow in the footsteps of his father, but it seems inevitable. Jessica apologizes for being controlling with him. She tells off the Reverend Mother, and the old crone is taken away. Jessica says ultimately Paul's decision is one that he has to make alone.

It's only now that Paul can see his third option. He looks at Chani, eyes watering.

PAUL: 'I'm so sorry...'

RESOLUTION

We cut to a wedding. Paul's bride walks down the aisle, her face covered by a veil. When Paul pulls up the veil, we see it's Irulan, the Emperor's daughter. To ensure peace, he's marrying a woman he does not love and who doesn't love him. He'll get the noble bloodline and in doing so take the throne from the unstable Emperor. Paul has willingly followed precisely the path of his father. History has repeated itself completely.

Chani will be kept on as royal concubine just as Jessica was. In the sidelines, Jessica assures Chani that her role will be an easy one. Chani knows Paul loves her, but it provides little comfort.

As the story began with a party, it will end with one as well. Everyone bows to Paul; he's the striking image of Leto. The other Houses whisper that the easy part was taking the throne, the hard part will be in keeping it. There will always be more plans,

more subterfuges. We get hints at sequels here, and a few of the pieces we've left out of should make tantalizing appearances.

Chani spots several men we've never seen before, huddled and whispering in the corner. They look weirdly alien, their bodies twisted, distorted. Jessica says they're members of the SPACING GUILD, a powerful organization that has been watching the events from afar. It's hinted that they're the ones Paul will be taking orders from as Emperor. In the background, we see the same workmen again taking the Harkonnen crests down, putting the Atreides crests back up. They're skeptical peace will last.

The final image of the film is Chani—eight months pregnant with Paul's child—looking on ambivalently at Paul, who's unsettled by the power he now holds.