

## More Thoughts on the Show with Priya



[Opening theme music with voiceover.]

### **Priya from Rehydrate**

"How did Demerzel not know about this tampering with the DNA? Because she seems to have her eyes on all things concerning Empire, and she in particular has sort of been the one to bring these Cleons into the world. In a sense. Brother Dawn was basically executed for being an anomaly, and he, too, is an anomaly now. So it kind of creates this huge, like, huge internal conflict, this huge existential crisis for him."

[Theme music plays out.]

### **Joel McKinnon**

Welcome back, my wonderful and oh so patient friends, to another special episode of Seldon Crisis. You may recall if you've been with me for a while that I once did a quick rundown on my thoughts on the Apple TV show that aired last fall and ran for ten fascinating episodes covering the early part of the Foundation story in its own rather unique way. I wrote up my thoughts after episode three, when the broad outlines of showrunner David Goyer's approach to the story seemed clear. But there were another seven episodes to follow and I never spoke much about them.

## **Joel**

It was always my intention to do some kind of season ending recap to complete the analysis, but I kept that idea simmering on the back burner until now. A few months back, I found a great literary analysis podcast called Rehydrate that just happened to be covering the Foundation trilogy. I very much enjoyed listening to the three hosts as they discovered the story in real time, not spoiling themselves by looking ahead, but reading it chapter by chapter and sharing their often incorrect guesses about where things were heading. This was especially delightful with the Mule episodes because they had no idea how that story would have such a dramatic twist at the end.

And it was a lot of fun to listen to them come upon the shocking conclusion and share their reactions. One of those hosts also shared that she had watched the entire Apple TV series and appeared to have largely enjoyed it, and she agreed to join me here on Seldon Crisis to help me revisit it and provide some analysis. Welcome, Priya, to Seldon Crisis. Why don't you just introduce yourself to our listeners?

## **Priya**

Hi, my name is Priya, and I, together with my co hosts Dan and Talia, host the Rehydrate podcast, which can be found on Apple Podcasts or Rehydrate space. And I have a background in English Lit and a deep interest in Sci-fi, which is what attracted me to the world of Sci-fi podcasts. In a sense. It all started off with my love of reading Liu Cixin's Remembrance of Earth's Past series, and that sort of got me into Sci-fi again after many years of being away from it. And after my podcast hosts and I finished reading that series, we kind of jumped into the Asimov series, and each of us had had a little bit of exposure to Asimov, but none of us had read his most famous work, I guess, which is Foundation, on our podcast.

We looked at the first three books of the series and talked about that and that's how we came to discover this Seldon Crisis podcast. And my first exposure to Asimov was when I was taking a Sci-fi class in college and my class and I read I Robot, which is a collection of really thought provoking and often really endearing short stories focused on AI and their relationship to humans or future humans. And I should add that that book is rather different from the Will Smith movie, much as this show is significantly different from the Foundation book. So I was actually really fascinated and kind of almost grateful that the show kind of does its own unique thing.

And I was excited to have this opportunity to talk further about it.

## **Joel**

Okay, so what we're going to do is take turns providing a brief recap of each episode and then talk a little about it. And I'll start with episode one entitled The Emperor's Peace. And before I even do that, I want to tell you the theme intro is really dramatic and beautiful and it's one of my favorite things. I never skipped it. So The Emperor's Peace opens with a short scene on a wintry world we'll later find out as Terminus and it introduces a very different Salvor Hardin than the one in the books, but we'll get into that later.

A narrator who we'll discover is the voice of Gaal Dornick, also quite different than the one in the books, introduces the story from a perspective well in the future, as if she's telling an old familiar story. Then we transition to her home planet, Gaal Dornick's home planet of Synnax, a place run by religious fundamentalists. And it's a water world. That is where the water is getting higher, the sea level is rising, and she's the only one who seems to care about that. They all think that the priests are going to or their gods will deal with it.

So then she travels to Trantor to meet Hari Seldon and she meets a spy for the Empire named Jerald. On the way, she goes through this jump ship routine, which is also very dramatic, and it heads for Trantor. And when it gets there, they see the Starbridge, which is a space elevator. They take it down to the planet and she meets Seldon's son, Raych. And then we transition to three fascinating characters the Cleone emperors, brothers Dawn, Day and Dusk, along with their servant Demerzal, a lady we'll get to know very well. And they greet ambassadors from these distant worlds, Thespus and Anacrion.

And then Seldon and Gaal are arrested. And Seldon had predicted this and they stand trial for disturbing the peace due to Seldon's psychohistorical predictions. Gaal backs Hari and they are exiled to distant Terminus. Then there's a very dramatic scene when the terrorists blow up the Starbridge and millions are killed by its fall. So let's talk about that one. A little bit. What do you think, Priya?

### **Priya**

So right off the bat, when I started watching this, I was instantly drawn in. And I really appreciated that about the show because a lot of the times you'll start a show and it'll sort of drag its feet to kind of get into it. But I felt like they did such a good job, not just visually, but just in terms of the writing itself, of drawing you into this world that I felt myself instantly captivated. And I really appreciate when a show can do world building on that level, because when you read Sci-fi that's set in the future, I think that envisioning a futuristic world is a very unique and immersive reading experience because these things just come to life in your mind.

And to see that brought to life beautifully on the show is something I very much appreciated. So, yeah, the other thing I wanted to talk about was Hardin in the show, whom we are first introduced to, is obviously a very different character entirely than the Hardin in the books. And also,

Gaal is very different. So I remember when reading the book, I was very disappointed by the sudden dropping off of the Gaal character, as well as many other characters we meet who are soon replaced by new characters. So I think the show giving us these consistent characters who we can kind of stick to and kind of cling to throughout the show was something that kept me more engaged in the show than I, at times felt in the books.

And I know that that's a little bit hard to hear for people who are very hardcore fans of these books. And of course, the show is just a completely different experience. It's not necessarily like a replacement for the books, but it's something I personally enjoyed very much. What did you think about that?

## **Joel**

Well, yeah, they couldn't be much more different, and especially with Gaal in the book, Gaal is like a non character, just kind of a point of view. There's almost nothing on Gaal's background. Also, Gaal's a man in the book, and I think it was a really good decision to switch the genders of Hardin and Gaal, because that was one big issue with Asimov writing at the time, is he didn't know how to write female characters and he just left them out, which now seems a little strange when you read it. And I'm sure you had that impression when you read it.

So I think that was a great choice. But what's great is that Gaal comes from this amazing place where she is brilliant, and that that's the worst thing to be on this planet, because they're fundamentalist, religious fundamentalists who don't want brilliant people messing with their carefully cultured religious culture. So that was interesting.

**Priya**

And we get to see so much more of that background story behind a character like Gaal come to life here, which is just and even more so in later episodes, which is something that really helped build the character up for us. And of course, as a female reader, I felt very kind of strange reading Asimov and I totally understand the sensibilities of the time were different and the sensibilities of us as modern readers and viewers will be different. And I think that the show makes for a much more digestible, I guess, form when you have characters that you can relate to and you see this racial diversity as well in the representation of these characters. I think that that all just kind of draws you in immediately from episode one.

And then, of course, we have to talk about the Cleons. And I just thought that that was such a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant plotline and it was very enjoyable to watch. And I think that the casting of Lee Pace is also brilliant and he just brought so much to the character. He brought the character to life. And I kept wondering if this comes from the books, like text itself, the Cleon characters. And I kept hoping to see that in the books that I did read.

**Joel**

I did not.

**Priya**

So I was a little bit disappointed. But perhaps you can speak more to whether or not we ever see this in the books. Unless you don't want to spoil the books, which is fine.

## **Joel**

Yeah, I won't spoil it a lot. But I will just say in the books, there's only well, there's two instances when Cleon is even mentioned. There's once in the second novel, *Foundation and Empire* in the General, where there's a scene with Cleon but there's an earlier Cleon that Hari Seldon meets in one of the prequels and has a couple of interesting scenes with but they are nothing like the ones in the show. I think that is a brilliant decision to come up with those three Cleons and follow them through time. It works just really well. A lot of stories come off of that.

And you had some quotes you wanted to talk about, right?

## **Priya**

Yes, indeed. So, yeah, I remember which part you were talking about with Cleon being introduced or mentioned once in that second book. And I was hoping that, oh, this is where he comes in, and then no. So it was a bit of a tease for me, having seen the show. But to get into the quotes that really struck me was the first quote that really resonated with me, I guess, is "please respect and enjoy the piece." Which is a common saying, I guess, on Trantor in this TV show world of Trantor. And I remember when I watched this with my husband, he commented on what a great phrase that was, just like, so pleasant to hear.

And then, of course, it's so ironic when we later come to learn what the price for this so called piece is and how fragile it is with the fall of the Empire looming. And at the end of that very same episode, we see the destruction of the Starbridge and the deaths of innocents that we like. It's in complete contrast to the sentiment of please respect and enjoy the peace

**Joel**

Propaganda, really.

**Priya**

Right, exactly. You really get the sense that, well, maybe there never really was peace if something like this can happen, right?

**Joel**

Yeah.

**Priya**

And then I also enjoyed all the dialogue that Brother Day has with Brother Dusk where he's kind of teaching him the ways of the world or whatever the world means to this long lineage of Cleons. And there's this one great line he says, which is that "art is merely politics." And I feel like this kind of speaks to how they see everything, in a sense, right. That for them, everything is politics. The way they manipulate religions, the way that they manipulate each younger generation, I guess, of Cleons is all through the lens of their political power and influence.

**Joel**

It's the only life they have, really. It's just the politics of the Empire.



## **Priya**

Exactly. And then there's a brilliant quote by Seldon which is kind of reiterated in many different forms by other characters later on, which is that Seldon says rather boldly, to Brother Day, "you offer nothing new, just a grape from the same vine destined for the same old bottle." And we'll hear of this later on when it's questioned whether the Cleons have souls. And I think that towards the end, it seems that the Brother Day who we will see in the later episodes, also comes to sort of acknowledge and accept this later on. So that was a really interesting sort of idea that's put out there from the very first episode.

And then finally, the quote that I loved is when Gaal says "it takes more power to build than to burn." Which is another quote that will come up later on in the series. So I feel like this first episode does a lot of groundwork and it establishes a lot of themes and ideas that we'll keep returning to. So I feel like as a first episode, which is kind of like what you'd consider a pilot episode, it does a really good job. And at the end of it, I definitely wanted to watch more.

## **Joel**

The Gaal quote that you mentioned was in a trailer, too, and I remember hearing it and thinking that's going to be a really good character. I really like her. That really drew me in.

## **Priya**

And she just has like a really good voice to do the narration and voiceover. So I just enjoyed listening to her kind of give her commentary on the themes and the ideas and the bigger concepts which are taken straight out of the book. So it really becomes a very inspired rendition of the work itself and it's really respecting the work I feel, even though it's changing so much.

**Joel**

Okay, so moving on to episode two Preparing to Live. I will let Priya summarize it.

**Priya**

So we start this episode on Trantor, where Demerzel takes part in a murderous raid on the suspected terrorists. Then Harry, Gaal, Raych and Foundation scientists travel to Terminus aboard the Deliverance, preparing for their plan to live on a hostile planet and create the Encyclopedia Galactica. Gaal and Raych have become a romantic couple. And back on Trantor, the Empire is raging over the Starbridge, interrogates the ambassadors and hold a public mass execution while ritually bombarding their homeworlds. So basically the homeworlds of these two empires, Anacreon and not empires, but worlds Anacreon and Thespin are destroyed. Demerzel and Brother Dusk visit a seer priest from Synnax.

She is injured and it is revealed that she is a robot who apparently has lived for thousands of years. Back on deliverance. Harry and Raych are troubled. Gaal spends a lot of time in the water reciting Primes. Then Raych stabs Seldon to death and sends Gaal out in an escape pod to an unknown fate.

**Joel**

Yeah, that was a rather shocking ending, as I recall.

**Priya**

Indeed.

**Joel**

Yeah. So any other thoughts on this one?

**Priya**

So, yeah, I felt that I was very fascinated by the Demerzel character in this episode. I think I had already suspected that she was going to be a robot, based on her very calculated and stoic mannerisms and sort of like I don't know, her speech seems a little bit robotic to me, but I find her character to be among the most fascinating in the series, and I'm very fascinated by how robots tie into this. And when I read the first two Foundation books, I was somewhat disappointed that there were no narratives around AI. So I don't know if you want to speak to that, but I would love to know.

**Joel**

Yeah, it's kind of interesting. When he wrote a lot of the robot stories, Asimov wrote a lot of the robot stories first, and I believe he had even no, he hadn't written the Robots and Empire stories yet, but he was so ready to write something else. And when he started into this, he just said, I'm going to write this story without robots in it and see if I can do it. But the funny thing is, eventually he came to miss his robots and brought them back in much later in the series, even after the first trilogy, when he started rewriting it in the 80s, when he like, 40 years later.

And he really connects this whole series of books called the Robots and Empire series with Foundation in a pretty fascinating way.

**Priya**

So that's a whole other series, the Robots and Empire, is that what it's called?

## **Joel**

It doesn't have an official name, but it starts with, it's actually like a Sherlock Holmes kind of thing with an investigator, human investigator and a robotic Watson and he wanted to see if he could write a Sherlock Holmes kind of mystery novel featuring robots and put it in a science fiction setting. So it's like a few thousand years in the future, not way in the future like these are, but it connects into the same universe. It's a great series. It's wonderful to read. It's not nearly as long as...

## **Priya**

I'll definitely check that out. Yeah. And then one final thought that I had on this episode was upon Empire destroying the world of Thespian And Anacreon, which is horrifying. Brother Dawn kind of almost like very stoically asks Demerzel, "how often do we choose this?" This being like destruction of this kind? And he's saying this as he's looking upon the hanging Thespian and Anacreon diplomats, I guess. And Demerzel responds, "you always do." And in a kind of chilling, robotic sort of way. And you know that she's a robot who's been alive for thousands of years and she's seen the rise and fall of civilizations in that sense.

So that's also sort of fascinating and chilling at the same time that she's seen humans choose these types of things over and over again.

## Joel

Yes, that was a great moment and definitely chilling. So let's move on to episode three, which is called The Mathematicians Ghost. And in this one they separated it into two sections, or the first section of the episode, about the first 20 minutes - half an hour, is all set on Trantor with the Empire and it's all about the latest Brother Dusk preparing for his ritual suicide, which apparently happens every time one of them gets to a certain age. It's time for them to go. And so in this kind of mini play, Brother Dusk is preparing and he's reminiscing.

They go through a really interesting scene with Demerzel and Brother Dusk where she's reflecting on the original Cleon I. In fact, they do a flashback to her with Cleon the First when the Starbridge was being built and they have a little intimate conversation. Then they go forward again and to the present time. And then they go through this ritual of him going to this special room where he gets zapped by this laser kind of thing and turns into ashes. But before he does that, he has a little bit of a hesitation. He doesn't really want to die, it appears.

And the other two, Day and the newly adult Dawn, arrive and they have a little baby there and that's the latest Dawn who's going to be the new Dawn. And then for a moment there's four of them and then one of them is going to die. And as Dusk is proceeding to the laser death, he sees the baby. He looks at the baby and he has this moment of misgiving and he says something about it like there's something wrong. And then he's prodded by Demerzel, like with this very characteristic palm in the back to go ahead and die.

And he does. So he does his job and he gets zapped. Then we switch over to Terminus and now we find the Foundation scientists have arrived there. It's a wintry world. And they find this very strange object floating just above the surface that they call the Vault, which produces what they call

a null field that stops anyone from approaching, get closer to the Vault except for the warden, Salvor Hardin. And then the scientists begin their work, living in portions of the spaceship, the Deliverance, which brought them there, and it's been disassembled. And the rest of it is just a wreck.

On the outskirts, there's a tower and a statue of Seldon in the city square. Then Hardin, on one of her patrols, has a vision of a boy running, and she follows him into the remaining wreck of the Deliverance. And she sees this, there's this kind of native creature that looks like a little dragon, and she's aiming at it. And then suddenly she realizes that she's surrounded by Anacreon raiders, all with bows and arrows aimed at her. And that's the cliffhanger ending of the episode. So any thoughts on that one, Priya?

### **Priya**

So my thoughts were more so regarding this strange ritual in which Brother Dusk now turned Brother Darkness is being sort of euthanized, which is very strange. They have this strange ritual and that they don't just let him die of, like, natural causes. And when he looked back at the new Brother Dawn and the baby Brother Dawn, and said, something is wrong in that moment, I just felt like he was saying that because he was trying to, I guess, delay and stall, going to his own death. But then later on, when we find out that there actually is something wrong and I put air quotes over that with Brother Dawn, it does make you wonder what this Brother Darkness sensed in that moment and what he may have noticed, because he also went into the room where the new Brother Dawn was about to be born, and Demerzel sort of told him he's not supposed to be there.

So it's kind of mysterious if he had some sort of awareness of this version of Brother Dawn being different in any way.

**Joel**

And then makes you wonder if it wasn't the first time that he had snuck down there and maybe seen Demerzel doing something with that chamber or something, or somebody else messing with the new babies, whatever you call it... incubation tank.

**Priya**

Incubation tank, yes. That's good. Yeah.

**Joel**

Maybe there's something we don't know that he saw and he guessed at the last second.

**Priya**

I had my suspicions about Demerzel because she's always been there, right? So based off of what we will find out later on in the series, it makes you wonder. And then the other thing that I wanted to talk about was whether or not you had a little bit of trouble initially following this lineage of like, it's Brother Day from episode one, who has now turned into Brother Dusk. Brother Dusk from the first episode has turned into Brother Darkness. And then the child Brother Dawn that you see in episode one is now Brother Day.

**Joel**

Is that correct? Definitely, yeah. And it's tricky. You kind of get used to it after a while, but at first it was a little strange. And I know on another podcast I follow called Stars End, they had a habit of referring them by their numbers, like 12, 13 and 14. Interesting, that seemed to help them line them up. But yeah, watching it, you have to see, oh yeah, this Brother Day, like in the later episodes, you see, this Brother Day is the one that was dawn earlier. That was the one that Demerzel was raising, and now he's just like Brother Dusk was back then and all that.

And that's going to get really interesting, I think, going forward when they get farther into the future. And there's different changes in each of them, especially with this contamination problem we'll get to later.

**Priya**

Right? Yeah. I think that as we go into further episodes after this one, there were parts that dragged a little bit for me, and I'll speak more to that after you summarize the next episode.

**Joel**

Okay, this one's your turn.



## **Priya**

Oh, yes. After I summarize this episode. So this is episode four, Barbarians at the Gate. In this episode, we learn of a major religion called Luminism. And there is at the center of this faith an individual named Zephyr Halima, who is an influential candidate for the next Proxima, and she threatens the Cleon Empire by asserting that Cleons do not have souls. Brother Day later on, as he's kind of frustrated by this development, expresses frustration towards Brother Dusk and criticizes him for his past actions, which he believes have led to the current conflicts threatening the Empire, which also align with Seldon's predictions, which Brother Dusk had dismissed.

Brother Day decides to attend the Luminist conclave to undermine Zephyr Halima's influence. Brother Dusk, meanwhile, sends Commander Dorwin to visit Foundation as they have not heard any word from Foundation on Terminus, Hardin manages to outsmart and capture the Anacreon huntress Fara. This is the Fara that we met at the end of the previous episode when Salvor Hardin was surrounded by Anacreon soldiers. Fara claims that her mission is to use the colony ship's navigation computer to find her people a new homeworld. Meanwhile, Anacreon soldiers have surrounded Terminus. Hardin also experiences visions in this episode of a child in Trantor's Imperial Library where Seldon worked.

In this episode, we also begin to see that Brother Dawn seems different from the other Cleons.

## **Joel**

Indeed. And what do you think about this one? Any idea?

## **Priya**

So I was struck with the conversation around Cleons having souls since they're just kind of reiterations of the same genetic code in a sense. And I guess the farther you get from the original person, are they less human? I think later on, Brother Dawn, the teenage Brother Dawn, is how I think of him. He'll later also say or face the idea of like, are we even human? We're not brothers. You are not my father. You're not my brother. Even so, it's like a very existential problem facing the Cleons. And I think later on when we learn about that, they've been sort of tampered with it's almost like a blessing in disguise in a sense, that they have some individuality because at this point in the show, you don't feel that they have any individuality.

And there is also a quote later on that Demerzel will say is that they don't have any individuated sentience, which was a fascinating way of putting it. So the way that that conversation starts off about Cleons and their souls really fascinated to me. And then later on there's also a voiceover from Gaal where she simply states that belief is a powerful weapon. And we'll see later on how belief and that faith is actually weaponized by Brother Day, the Luminist faith in particular. And it's a very fascinating sort of way in which he does it by sort of participating in the faith but then turning it on its head in a sense.

And then my question to you is did you at this point have any predictions around Salvor's visions and what they would pan out to be?

## Joel

Yes, I was constantly making wild guesses about what was going on with her visions. And at one point I thought when did I think it was Raych? I thought it was the young Raych, the the boy she was seeing. But I was also cheating and listening to podcasts and things with other people's ideas and looking at a lot of stuff on Reddit and all that, what wasn't horribly negative. And there were others that speculated that that was Raych, but I didn't get the idea that was revealed near the end we'll get to about where those visions really came from.

So I was pretty wrong about my guesses on...

Likewise.

And I wanted to say one thing. A lot of people, especially on Reddit, were furious about this show from the beginning because of the departures from the book and the books. And one of the reasons why I really looked forward to the show and appreciated that there were departures from the books is because I love the mystery element of Asimov. I love being surprised by things and I was constantly getting surprised in this episode. And so that's why I didn't mind it. And I kind of thought if they did do a word for word or very faithful translation of the books into the movie, it wouldn't work in our day and age very well for one thing.

But it also would be kind of boring to me. It would be more like a documentary or something. So it's fine by me that they introduced lots of crazy things. I think a lot of people there were people who were upset that maybe the ideas of psychohistory and the concepts weren't honored in the same way as they are in the books, and that's a different topic a little bit. And I think one thing you have to understand is this is only season one, and those ideas could be explored further in later seasons, especially when we get into things like The General, where it becomes a major theme,

psychohistory versus the great man theory of history and things like that. So we'll see.

### **Priya**

I 100% agree with that. I think that it's very interesting that you say it would kind of come across as sort of a documentary if they were 100% true to the text. And like I said in the beginning, I feel like the way that this show has been produced with the cast and everything, it's much more digestible to a modern audience, I feel.

### **Joel**

Okay, let's move on to episode five, Upon Awakening. In this one, we get a flashback to Gaal's life on Synnax, and we learn that her conflict with faith arose when she was forced to execute her former teacher, who was salvaging books from the ruins of a university. After the execution, Gaal swims down and salvages the books and begins to read them. The episode then shifts back to the present, and we see Gaal awakening after 34 years of cryosleep aboard a starship called The Raven. The ship appears to be automated by Raych, and it requires authorization from Raych.

It does not perform any unauthorized commands from Gaal. But Gaal manages to learn from the ship that Raych was executed for murdering Seldon, and she does not take it very well. She's really shocked this just happened. At Terminus, the people of Foundation attempt to get aid from the Imperial ship, Aegis. Commander Dorwin demands that the captive huntress Fara is brought to the Foundation tower. Upon being brought to the tower, she disables the Terminus city fence, the electronic fence that's keeping all the Anacreon people out, and reveals that her mission is to destroy Foundation as revenge for the destruction of her home planet at the hands of Empire.

She asserts that Seldon's prophecy led to this. The Anacreon soldiers then storm the city and shoot down the Imperial ship Aegis, which was quite dramatic, as I recall.

### **Priya**

Yeah, the ship kind of striking down to the ground was sort of like a smaller version of what we see in episode one of Starbridge just collapsing down to the ground. I think the cinematography in these scenes was done brilliantly, and they do like their explosions. Yeah, I just think these big shots panned out from bird's eye view are really impactful. And then I think that here, finding out, like, Gaal's background and what led to this conflict between religion and science for her is really fascinating. And we see more world building through this as well, which I really appreciate.

And it's also interesting that the people of Anacreon hold Seldon responsible at the end of the day for the fate that their world endured at the hands of Empire. So I don't quite understand that. But it seems like she feels like Empire was so incensed by these prophecies that it led to sort of like a backlash that affected her planet.

### **Joel**

Yeah, I actually never thought about that, how she would know that it was Seldon responsible. I guess maybe the word got out that there must have been a lot of wondering, why did the Empire go to such extremes to torture our planet? And they must have tried to find the answer. And maybe that was one of the theories.

**Priya**

Right? Yeah. And I think that it also kind of speaks to how these worlds are like planets apart. So naturally, the information that they're getting is not necessarily going to be accurate information. So that's definitely a reality that seems plausible. And then I felt that the Seldon hologram, I guess he's sort of a hologram, right? Appearing at the end on the ship was so much more compelling to me than Seldon's brief appearances every, like, few hundred years or so in the books to talk about a new crisis. And then also because of the casting of Jared Harris, I had figured that Seldon himself would be a bigger character and have a stronger role and presence in the show.

And I definitely wasn't disappointed. And I couldn't help but think, I don't know if you've watched the HBO miniseries Chernobyl, Jared Harris is in that, and I feel like he has almost like this similar role to continuously be warning people of things that people don't listen to.

**Joel**

I saw that, I loved it. I thought that same thing. I realized I caught that same pattern of his character being the kind of the prophet of doom, and really interesting how that synchronized.

**Priya**

It's like he was born to play these roles.

## **Joel**

Yeah. There was something else I wanted to say about Fara, though, in this episode. It's the one I think I liked her the most because she first appears to be like a kind of the typical just crazy, radical person. But they really brought in where her thinking came from. They humanized her in it. She's nasty and horrible and psychotic, but you can see how she got that way. And you kind of sympathize with her a little bit. I always like it when villains are made to be a little deeper and not just cutouts.

## **Priya**

Yeah, definitely. I feel like you see that sort of thing happening also with Brother Day where you feel like, yeah, he's kind of like a villain. But you see these moments where there is greater complexity and you just have to pause and think that, just as in the real world, no one is black or white in terms of good versus evil, that sort of concept. It's really the show just taking its time to really flesh out the characters and give them these dark sides and bright sides. So I think that that was really well done. All right, so moving along to episode six, which is called Death and the Maiden.

It starts with Brother Day and Demerzel arriving at the Maiden, which is the Luminist's sacred planet, and they are met only by Zephyr Halima. Instead of the adoring crowds that Day would have expected, day offers the Luminists a nice bribe, which is a desalination plant to undermine Halima. But she gains the upper hand with her eulogy of the deceased Proxima, which is also an attack on Imperial cloning. Then on Trantor, Brother Dawn romances Azura the gardener, and reveals his genetic peculiarities, like his colorblindness. On Terminus, Lord Dorwin crawls out of the wreckage of the Imperial jump ship and is taken under custody by the Anacreoneans.

Hardin is saved from captivity by the kids and goes on a mission with Abbas to try to sabotage the corvettes and strand Fara. Abbas is killed in the

mission while successfully destroying the ships. During the mission, Salvor has a vision revealing that Raych was supposed to have taken the escape pod instead of Gaal. Hardin and Hugo are captured and taken to Hugo's ship, where Fara has gathered a few of the colonists to accompany them on a mission to the Anthor Belt. Hugo links command of his ship to Salvor to save her from being killed by Fara, and she takes the controls and the ship departs Terminus.

**Joel**

Okay. Yeah, that was a lot. Any thoughts on this one?

**Priya**

Well, I thought that a lot of the scenes where they're on aboard the ship kind of dragged for me. And then I was talking to Dan, who is my co host on the Rehydrate podcast, and he was also agreeing because he also started watching the show much later after I did. I think he's only recently finished it, but he felt like these scenes sort of dragged you. So I was a little bit validated to feel that I wasn't the only one. I don't know if that was the case for you, if you found those fascinating.

**Joel**

No. And actually I watched with my son and he was particularly down on the Terminus scenes in general compared to the Empire scenes, which I think was a lot of people had that impression. When I watched it again, I appreciated the Terminus scenes a little bit more because I think part of it is the Empire scenes were so perfect, they were so well done that it was hard. You see a difference when you go to the Terminus side. And it could be the writing, too, that there was just better writers on the Empire side doing that material.



It grew on me and I kind of got used to the deficiencies of it. And I kind of also got to appreciate some of the nuances of the characters a little more the second time I watched it. It evened out.

### **Priya**

I think those scenes in particular must be particularly hard to write and also to consume as a viewer because I remember a lot of people love the show *The Expanse*, which also kind of takes place in outer space and all these different worlds and different planets, I guess. Do you enjoy the *Expanse*?

### **Joel**

Oh, yeah, I like it a lot. It's an amazing show.

### **Priya**

So I keep thinking, like, I'm going to get back to it because I could never get into it because I started watching it. And while I find the overarching plot interesting, I have such a hard time with people on ships doing different things and moving from point A to B. So I think that might just be like a me problem that I don't particularly find this fascinating and maybe not even a writing problem because I feel like this is just very difficult to write. But I think that they've probably done the best they can. And Salvor's character is compelling in every scene that she's in, but I just felt myself kind of tuning out during those scenes.

But then, of course, I would always be brought back in by the scenes where you return back to the Cleons. And I think that a lot of these scenes where Lee Pace is having these interactions with the people on the Maiden planet and just these dialogues with Demerzel are just some of my favorites. It turned into, like a Lee Pace appreciation episode for me at times. And then it was also kind of weird and creepy when Brother Dusk takes Brother Day

to the brothel and he mentions that the memories of the girls are wiped clean before they leave Trantor.

So this speaks to their existing some form of technology that can manipulate minds in some capacity, which is also a theme that we see pretty differently. But it's there in the books, so I wonder kind of like a nod to that.

**Joel**

Yeah, it may have been. I didn't really think about that.

**Priya**

Yeah, it's not quite the same thing because you know that it's being done through technological means. But I feel like that's kind of like a concept that's sort of been plucked out of the books.

**Joel**

Yeah, cool.

**Priya**

And then Brother Dawn in this episode is just becoming a very sympathetic character for me. And it just made the Cleon scenes even more interesting because it's always fascinating when you have an anomaly of this kind. And similarly, in a similar fashion, I felt in the books, whenever there was an anomaly, it always struck me as one of the more interesting parts of the book. So this is where I was even further drawn into the world of the Cleons.

## **Joel**

Yeah. After 400 years of this same static characters, it would seem that they would start to feel a little trapped. And Brother Dawn kind of expressed that feeling of like, is this all there is? And here I am, like, one of these, like, trapped, static characters, and I'm even, like, screwed up, you know, I don't have I don't I don't even do it right because I don't even eat with the right fork and all those kind of things. So it was yeah, it definitely made me sympathetic to him.

## **Priya**

Yeah. And also it was interesting that he picked upon such superficial things that make him different but were important enough for him to conceal so that he wouldn't be sort of found out. Like, I clasp my right thumb over my left and my brothers do it the other way. So it was kind of like, wow, there's so much about them that is so superficial that these little tiny details matter. So that really struck me.

## **Joel**

Yeah. And it made me wonder about what it would be like to be in the court, grow up as like in the 1700s in France or something, if you're in Louis the 14th Court or something, just how everything is so scrutinized and all that. And you have to be so formal and do everything in the correct way to an even higher degree, I guess. So let's move on to episode seven with Mysteries and Martyrs. Okay, so when Hugo's ship, the Beggar, reaches the Anthor Belt, they discover there's a huge ship hiding in the Anthor Belt that Fara knows all about.

It's a lost Imperial jump ship from seven centuries earlier. And Fara forces Hardin, Hugo, and the colonists to jump through space to it in their spacesuits. But somehow Hugo misses and flies off, apparently to his death. Dorwin opens the ship and then is killed by Fara, which I thought was kind of disappointing because I really liked his character in the book,

which was, of course, completely different, but also because he managed to survive that ridiculous crash. And now he's just killed because he opened the door and he's no longer useful to her. So then the remaining colonists proceed to the bridge, taking losses on the way from various hazards and automatic weapons.

On the Maiden, this one jumps around quite a bit. On the Maiden, Brother Day decides to walk the spiral, a sacred pilgrimage considered extremely dangerous. And he must have his shield and nanites removed, his aura I think they call it. Then we go to Trantor, where Azura convinces dawn to escape with the help of her and her friends in the scar. So she's apparently part of some underground movement. Now we go on to The Raven, and the digital copy of Hari's consciousness comes to life. And he has this very tense exchange with Gaal, who's totally traumatized because so many things are happening in a hurry and they're all terrible.

And Hari's brain data has been stored in the knife Raych used to kill him, and it's thrown into the escape pod with her. Hari explains that Raych was supposed to join him on The Raven, while Gaal had an essential role on Terminus. Hari's confused and worried about this now - Hologram Hari. Hari leads Gaal to realize that she has a special capability of prescience which she proves by shielding herself from a micrometeoroid which she had miraculously anticipated breaking through a viewport. And we were reminded of all of these clues we got along the way like that she knew that the Starbridge was going to fall before it happened.

She made some comment to Jerald on the ship about "did you say something?" And he hadn't said anything. There's a lot of little things that showed that she had some kind of prescience. So what do you think?

## **Priya**

So I thought that there is this one thing that I wanted to start with is that Zephyr Halima says to Brother Day, "you are the reverberations of a dead man's ego." And I think there is expressed this thought. Of course, Hari Seldon mentions it in season episode one. He says pretty much the same thing. And then there's also this question that one of the characters asked and I forgot to jot down who it was that asked. Imagine how much overconfidence or how big your ego would have to be for you to think that you are such perfection that everyone who comes after you in your lineage, I guess, should be you.

It should be an exact replica of you. And that sort of kind of encapsulated in the statement that you're the reverberations of a dead man's ego.

## **Joel**

Right. I remember the quote, but I can't remember I think was it Halima that said it?

## **Priya**

I don't know. But it was someone who was, like, pondering that this Cleon dynasty is just like the same over and over and over again. But I can't remember who it was. I think it was in one of the recent episodes before she said this as well. And then I wanted to know how you feel about the revelation that Gaal can, as she said, feel the future. I think I was definitely intrigued by the implications for the plot but I didn't quite, or at least I'm not grasping how we see a payoff to that in this season other than it seems like the same power that allows her to do this is also creating that link between her and Hardin.

But I wasn't quite sure if I saw a very clear payoff to that. And then if there is a book premise for this as well.

## **Joel**

No, and it's kind of the opposite. There was no Gaal in the book, effectively. So of course there wasn't any idea of that for this character. But it's kind of a problem that a lot of people find, I think, is that with Hardin and with Gaal they have kind of special qualities. And the idea of psychohistory is that nobody's really that special. That it doesn't require standout individuals for things to play out in a certain way. It kind of seems to undermine the concepts of the core concept of psychohistory a little bit. The one thing is I don't know where they're going with that and there may be explanations for it in the next season.

That's one of the things I picked up from listening to podcasts with the showrunner Goyer. In fact, I was listening to one this afternoon where he said, there's often an expectation that we're going to explain everything during a season by the time it's over. But quite often there will be things we won't explain yet, but they may be explained in a future season, and there may be some things that will never be explained. But he was kind of hinting at a lot of the things that people are complaining about never really being resolved will be resolved and he's kind of pulling people to watch the next season as well. So I think that might be part of it, right?

## **Priya**

And where we see the season kind of leave off, I'm hoping that we'll receive those explanations in a future season because I felt like it definitely kind of leaves more to be desired since you've set up all of this and then kind of just left us hanging on that. And by book premise for this, I meant more. So, like, is this plucked out of maybe another character or something that this is a nod to? But I think all in all, I think it's just speaking to the anomaly that we find that sort of turns Hari Seldon's plan, or rather sort of subverts it.

## **Joel**

You made me think of something. There is a character in the prequels, in the second prequel, and I don't think this is too much of a spoiler to talk about it, but her name was Wanda Seldon and she was Hari's granddaughter. And she develops or surprises everybody with being able to read minds, to sense kind of like ESP or something. She can kind of get a sense of what people are thinking at a distance and just as a very small child. And it turns out that she becomes important to creating the Second Foundation. So I think this could be like Gaal's role.

But the problem is the Second Foundation isn't supposed to be about prescience. So it looks like maybe in the show it's going to have a little bit of a different way that mentalics works than in the books.

## **Priya**

So that's very interesting that you should mention that because it seems that Salvor's ability is less about this feeling the future that Gaal says, but she has this uncanny ability to read people as she says. So she deduces that Fara lost a brother and a lot of things about her childhood trauma of seeing her homeworld destroy that she would never be able to know. So I guess maybe that's an odd to that.

## **Joel**

Remember I mentioned on your podcast when we did the quotes one that one recently, there's a book by Asimov called Nemesis where there's a young female character who gets in all kinds of trouble because she reads body language so well. That she knows what people are thinking. So that's kind of an Asimovian kind of idea that Hardin's abilities kind of play into there.

## **Priya**

That's really fascinating. I do remember you mentioning that. I will definitely check that one out. All right, so moving on to episode eight called The Missing Piece, and I want to preface this by saying I think this was one of my favorite episodes. So it starts with Hardin and Pirene, all that's left of the colonists with Fara and her henchmen Rowan. It starts with them reaching the bridge. Hugo reaches an Anthor Belt asteroid and calls his Thespin buddies for help. They attack the Invictus just as Fara breaks through to the bridge while Salvor fights her ship while Salvor fights her ship, leaps into the unknown.

On the Raven, Hari tells Gaal that the reason they are going to Helicon is to start the Second Foundation, but she's had enough, sabotages the ship and leaves in the escape pod bound for Synnax, a voyage which will take 138 years. On the Maiden, Day completes the arduous Spiral migration and ends by finding a subterranean pool where he has been told to expect a vision. Later, he appears before the Zephyrs and describes his vision of a three petaled flower resembling a plant sacred to the Luminists. He leaves in triumph and later instructs Demerzel to secretly assassinate Halima, an act that causes her great distress due to her programming. On board the jump ship, Demerzel congratulates Day for completing the Spiral and receiving a vision.

As Day is about to go into the jump, he flashes back to his time in the cave and it is revealed that he had no vision at all. So I think it's in this episode, what I was talking about previously, that it's more clearly shown how Salvor can read people. But I think the excitement of that was kind of like lost for me over what's happening with Brother Day and how it ties back to Gaal's voiceover saying belief is a powerful weapon. And in this episode you really see Brother Day weaponizing religion, this religion in particular, to command their loyalty.



And I just think that Lee Pace is absolutely brilliant in this episode. There are moments during his walk through the desert where you feel like there's some depth to his character of Brother Day. He shows the old man that he ends up walking with a lot of compassion, I felt, by trying to help him continue on when he has fallen. And then finally, he actually takes the time, even in his own tired and exhausted state, to move his body off the path. And he seems to be experiencing some character growth as a part of this process of probably for the first time in his life, enduring a physical struggle of this kind without his nanites.

**Joel**

And his aura too. Exactly. That kind of humanized him at for that period.

**Priya**

And it sort of speaks to the doubts that are repeatedly cast over whether the Cleons have a soul. And you begin to feel as if the answer is yes, they do have a soul. But in the end, he turns around and weaves a false narrative of a vision he never had in the cave and he has Demerzel assassinate Halima.

**Joel**

There's another thing that's interesting. There is that all of his apparent human stuff with the stranger and I love that guy I can't remember his name that he walked with in the spiral, but all the friendliness to him was arguably to find out what people are expected to see when they get to the end of the spiral. And the guy does tell him that you're expected to see a vision and so he's already got that. He's kind of coming up with that plan and he might be doing all of this kindness to just elicit that information.

**Priya**

That's probably very in character for him. So I believe that.

## **Joel**

But you want him to be human by this point. Yeah, he's been so nasty.

## **Priya**

Yes. And I think that it's just the way that he's played the casting, again, so brilliant. There seem to be so many layers to his character that you just want to peel back in every episode and see like, oh, well, you always wonder what he's truly thinking. And I think this episode kind of just pulls you in even more into his mindset. And then I think that the final scene between Demerzel and Halima was probably, hands down, one of my probably my favorite in the entire show because it's acted so well, first of all. And it creates so much more curiosity for me around the character of this robot who has seen it all, as Halima says.

And Demerzel claims that she has no choice over her actions, but you clearly can see like, remorse and this overwhelming desire to not follow this imperative, but she ends up having to follow it anyway. And Halima questions her as to whether she actually has no choice. And she insists that she feels that Demerzel has a soul despite being a robot. And it's actually Cleon who is human and yet has no soul for making her do these things that she doesn't want to do. And that's when she says to Halima, like Empire, I do not have individuated sentience.

And then later on you feel again like she is the one who has more of a soul because she describes the vision that she had thousands of years ago and then she says, "seeing nothing, I would not wish that emptiness on anyone." And it's a really chilling thing for her to say because you can tell in that moment that she suspects that Brother Day actually had no vision at all. But she cannot say that outright due to her subservient position towards him. But she kind of leaves him with that food for thought that just think about that.

## **Joel**

She's putting the shiv in. She definitely relished that moment somehow. You could tell she had to get him back for making her do that. And I think that's first of all, I wanted to point out that Goyer said that was his favorite scene, and he also said that that was Laura Birn's screen test was to do that scene. And he said that in her screen test, she read that scene so incredibly well that he knew she was going to be brilliant in this role.

## **Priya**

Oh, that's so good to know, because I felt like she was absolutely heartbreaking, like, achingly beautiful in that scene. And, yeah, she definitely deserved that role. It was so good. She was brilliant.

## **Joel**

Yeah. Okay. Episode nine, the first crisis on the Invictus. Hardin finds, to her surprise, that the ship is in orbit around Terminus and that Pirene has had sacrificed himself in the navigator position by jamming that thing back into the back of his neck and connecting with the ship and telling it where to go somehow subconsciously. So Arden ties Fara up and Rowan and then spots the Beggar out in space and she jumps to it and she manages to get inside. Then she sees Hugo on her screen. She almost shoots him. And then at the last minute, she communicates and finds out it's her boyfriend and he reunites with his oh... he had come over with his Thespian friends dragged in the wake of the jumping Invictus.

When the Thespian reach the Invictus bridge, Fara has escaped. Nobody notices at first. Meanwhile, Hardin descends to Terminus and finds that everyone, the Terminus people, the Foundation people, and the Anacreonians have all been rendered unconscious by the expanded null field on Trantor. This one does jump around on Trantor. Brother Dawn is called by Dusk to examine the painting of his hunt with Dusk. He puts on the corrective glasses that Azura had brought him secretly and sees

the three hidden gilly raptors from their hunt and knows Dusk now knows about his colorblindness. In panic, he escapes the palace and finds his way to Azura's apartment.

Azura shockingly begins shooting at him and he runs away, only to be recaptured and find another version of himself looking down at him, mocking his distress. It is explained that this clone was raised to take his place and he had been led all along by Azura's duplicity. After Dawn's nanites are exchanged with his clone. Brother Dusk arrives with a bunch of Stormtroopers and Dawn's clone is killed by the Shadow Master and Azura is sheathed and taken away. This is a really shocking scene. On Terminus, Salvor uses the Prime Radiant to open the Vault and the null field dies and all the unconscious colonists and Anacreonians wake up.

The Thespins arrive in their very strange looking ships and they confront the Anacreonians while leaving their ships hovering. Salvor tries to broker peace among the Thespins and the Anacreonians and colonists, and then Fara shows up. And just destroys the Thespin ships. And while she is using her ship, then she turns and starts bombarding the Vault with her ship. Salvor picks up her bow while she's distracted and shoots her through the neck. Hari Seldon walks out of the Vault and seems to have been aware that this is the way everything should have turned out. So plenty to talk about there.

## **Priya**

So I think that the show starts on a very poignant note where I'm just paraphrasing here because it was a longer quote. Gaal is narrating again and she questions what is man's greatest weapon and she goes through a list of actual weapons and then concludes that it's not all those things that you might think it's history because history is not fact, it's narrative. And I think that sort of just gets to the crux of the matter because when reading the books I was quite struck by the fact that we are so far into the future and history does not seem to have been preserved as well as you would hope for it to be preserved. Like historical accounts.

People don't quite seem to know that the origin planet for all of humanity was Earth. And that kind of struck me as really weird and kind of chilling because humans are so spread out across the galaxy now. So I think that's a really good commentary on history. And also, as people say that history is written by the victor and Hari Seldon also says it later on. So that also speaks to the fact that it's narrative and not always fact and history can be manipulated into lies. So I think that exploration of these themes through Gaal's narration was very beautifully done.

## **Joel**

I was going to add one thing about that first. It's really interesting. Well, you might not have noticed this in the book, but there is one other thing that Gaal Dornick is noted for in the book. He is Seldon's biographer and I think that's why they chose Gaal to be the one telling the story because it's told from kind of a future perspective, looking back on all this, right. So it's not really Gaal that's obviously in the books because Gaal apparently would have died before any of this stuff is happening. But I just kind of think that's where they drew that from.

Maybe. But the other thing that strikes me is how much duplicity there is in this thing. It's a running theme, right, of major lies and even the narrators

lying and admitting that she's lying or kind of questioning whether she's really telling the truth. So it makes it kind of like an unsteady ground. You don't know what to believe.

**Priya**

That's really fascinating. Yeah. I didn't remember because it's been a little while since I read the first book. I didn't remember Gaal being described as a biographer. But I think that...

**Joel**

It was in one of those Encyclopedia Galactica bits. I think at the very beginning. I think it's in the very first at the absolute beginning of the first book.

**Priya**

That's probably why I forgot it.

**Joel**

Yeah.

**Priya**

But that really kind of fits in with her being the narrator of this. That makes total sense. Now, the other moment that threw me in this, or rather the one moment that threw me in this episode was when suddenly Azura becomes a narrator for one scene only. And you feel like they're going to build her character up over the remainder of episodes, even though you know that there's only one more episode remaining. So it's kind of weird almost to do that, to almost be starting her off with her own story and then to bring all of that to a very swift end. It was a lot. I feel like it was almost like sensory overload. This episode where a lot of unexpected things happen. And then you find out that even the alternative Brother Dawn is still being controlled by these rebels. I guess. And he has sort of almost been hijacked for their purposes, if I got that right. It was a little bit confusing.

**Joel**

Yeah.

**Priya**

But yeah, it was a very weird episode. And I felt very sympathetic towards Brother Dawn in this moment because he's so innocent to the ways of the world, in a sense, and sort of lets himself get played.

**Joel**

Yeah. And I thought about this, and I think I understand why they chose to have Azura do the voiceover for that section. I think it's really about building the shock value of it because I remember when I was watching it, I felt drawn to Azura. I always felt drawn to her as like a very sympathetic character. And she was helping our poor brother Dawn all along. And then when he's trying to escape, that's when they have her describing what's going on. And she's talking about this idealizing, the culture of the scar, where she lives and how everybody is free and can see the stars.

And the real stars and you kind of get this really emotional feeling like she is like this nurturing character that's that's saving Brother Dawn from his horrible static palace life and giving him a real life. And he's going to building this just romantic vision of it. And it's a set up. It's totally a set up to blow your mind when you find out that she's evil.

### **Priya**

And it all happens so quickly, it seems all in the span of one episode. And I similarly felt a lot of sympathy towards her character as well. And she was always so presented as being so gentle and so nurturing, and then to suddenly see her come out in a totally different form. And the betrayal scene is just heartbreaking because when that realization dawns upon Brother Dawn, I don't know, my heart totally broke for him in that moment. And I think the actor also plays it out really well as this very naive and just childlike teenage boy who has fallen in love with this woman and he's run off, putting all his faith, all his eggs in one basket, or so it seems.

And then to be so horribly betrayed.

### **Joel**

There's that one part of it where he's looking at her first. He's looking at himself, this nasty version of himself. And then she comes in and is just kind of like draped over his shoulder. They're obviously intimate. They're the real thing. And he's been just totally the ultimate cuckolding.

### **Priya**

Yeah. So crushing. My heart was so broken.

### **Joel**

Yeah. So you get to do the very final episode, the summary.



## **Priya**

Okay, we've made it to episode ten, and this episode had a lot. So the opening shows Harry in his coffin, flying through space, transforming into the Vault. And then on Terminus, Harry tells the Thespins and an Anacreonians that their founding myth was a lie and they have no reason to hate each other. He manages to convince them to band together against the empire and explains how they can buy time by creating an appearance of a massive explosion in the region. Harry also tells the Foundation colonists that the Encyclopedia project was a lie and that they must themselves form the new power center to lead the eventual new empire.

Hari then returns to the Vault and tells Salvor he didn't produce her visions. This leads her to conclude that the visions came from her real mother, Gaal, and she decides to leave Terminus to find her. On Trantor, Day takes Azura for a walk in the garden and explains that she has taken his legacy, so now he will destroy hers. He explains that everyone who ever knew of her existence will be killed, then does so with a turn of his finger. Azura will be confined until death in a special chamber to live out her days with this knowledge in a special kind of sensory deprivation chamber, might I add, which is especially cruel punishment.

Day chooses to spare Dawn and a dramatic conflict with Dusk ensues, to be interrupted by the sound of Dawn's neck being broken by Demerzel. After Day tearfully lays Dawn's body on the incinerator slab and it is turned to ash, the Shadow Master appears and tells him that he also has been polluted by the errant DNA and that maybe Dusk has as well. Demerzel returns to her chambers and tears her face off, obviously in enormous emotional distress from killing Dawn in Gaal's escape tube. She awakens, descending to the surface of Synnax. The waters have risen and now most of her old village is destroyed.

She spots a light beneath the waves, dives down to it, and discovers another escape pod with someone inside whom she takes to the surface. It turns out to be Salvor Hardin, who explains that she is her daughter and gives her the Prime Radiant. Yeah, so a lot to unpack there.

## **Joel**

Yeah. And this is like the fireworks shows grand finale or it's just like, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. You just slapped back and forth through the whole thing and has the biggest I mean, the episode nine with the shock of Dawn's, the duplicity of Azura was a big shock. But this one has, like, one after another, which I found very Asimovian kind of like the end of Second Foundation, where the location of Second Foundation is like there's four different revelations of where it is in a very short time. So I really appreciated all the delightful surprises in this one, and they were all great.

## **Priya**

You know that moment at the end where Salvor and Gaal are face to face and are meeting each other for the first time as mother and daughter on this remote planet where they're the only ones there? It kind of brought me back. I just have to say this to that scene where I don't know if you've seen the prequel not the prequel, the newer Star Wars series where Ray arrives on the world or planet or whatever, where Luke Skywalker is and meets him for the first time and then the movie just ends right there. It was like that sort of a moment for me where these two very pivotal characters are meeting and then everything just ends right there.

And then you have to wait, I don't know, like, two years to find out what happens next. So, yeah, that was like that sort of a cliffhanger for me.

## **Joel**

But it won't be that long this time.

**Priya**

I know. I hope so.

**Joel**

Yeah, it was a good one. I think that's a really good example of what Goyer is talking about with we're not going to resolve everything in one season. You're going to have to wait for the next one to learn some more things.

**Priya**

It's simultaneously like as much of a cliffhanger.

**Joel**

It is.

**Priya**

It's also a very satisfying place to end because it's almost like these two characters have been trying to find each other for the entire season and now they are together. So did you expect at any point that this is what the connection between these two characters would be? Because you know what?

**Joel**

I did. But I have to tell you, I was a super geek on this and listening to all the podcasts and all the theories. So it was definitely a theory that I had entertained and was weighing as possible. But the Goyer interview that I was just referring to, that I listened to, he talks about the surprises and what people expected and what people didn't, what this percentage of viewers who were surprised by various things turns were. It was interesting. That one, he said he should have he gave too many clues because half of the audience, about 50%, were expecting it.

But if you go back to the one that shocked us totally with Azura, he said almost nobody picked up on that.

**Priya**

I definitely didn't.

**Joel**

Yeah, me neither. And I didn't see any theories that picked up on that, that expected that to be the story. And also when Demerzel kills Dawn, he said that blew everybody's mind. So he was very satisfied about those ones. And he said if he was to do it again, he wouldn't have even hinted as much as he did about the connection between Hardin and Gaal.

**Priya**

Yeah. So let's talk about that scene where Demerzel kills Brother Dawn, because I definitely was not expecting that. And I thought, like, in the end, in that scene, she shows almost uncharacteristically little emotion, and then you see all the emotion come out in the later scene. And of course, the person who is also not very characteristic of themselves in that scene is also Brother Day, where he has made this decision to forgive Brother Dawn and to not execute him. And then to see her carrying out her imperative or what she believes she has been programmed to do.

It's just a very intense scene because it's also happening while Brother Day and Brother Dusk are having this really physical fight where they're disagreeing with each other about the fate of Brother Dawn. So it's like a chaotic scene, and it works. The chaos works.

**Joel**

Well, I thought it was, like operatic. It was just so well staged, that whole I think every scene on the throne, in the throne room with the three chairs. And it's just the set is so operatic and so theatrical. And the way that builds to that fight scene and then the snap, it just so perfectly very well directed. And this one was the only episode directed by Goyer himself, which was interesting. So I think he's got a talent for that. But I wanted to point out one other thing. There was one tiny hint that she was going to kill him.

And it's a characteristic motion that she made way back in episode three with Dusk or Darkness as he was heading to his suicide. Right. Remember, she puts her palm against the small of his back to push him forward.

**Priya**

Yes, I do remember noticing that.

**Joel**

And she did the same thing with Dawn as they were right before that scene in that room. So she was leading him to his death.

**Priya**

Yeah, I sort of thought about that in hindsight, and also the length of time that she was sort of hugging and caressing him. But I kind of thought of that in hindsight after that shocking moment where she just, like, in a second, just ends his life. No, you go ahead.

## **Joel**

I was going to say, this is the first time it really comes fully into focus. The three Laws of robotics and the First Law, a robot shall never kill or harm a human, cause a human to come to harm. And she's violated the First Law so many times. But we know that she's able to violate the First Law because she's been reprogrammed by the Empire to, you know, to do they have their own programming that overrides her basic Three Laws, but we see that the First Law is still there and it has an effect on her.

She managed to assassinate Halima earlier and was obviously very upset about doing it, but this was too much for her and she kind of had a psychotic breakdown.

## **Priya**

Yeah, that was such a scary, terrifying, just visually captivating scene. I thought that was also very brilliantly done because you really, really see a mental breakdown happening in that AI sort of sense, like the way a robot would have a mental breakdown. That was beautifully shown. And I also think that these scenes in particular, very nicely juxtaposed the scene of strangely blissful scene of Azura and Brother Day walking through that garden where she's very stone faced because she knows that her fate now is not going to be good. And he's very calmly explaining to her what she has done and how it has impacted him and his legacy.

And it's just like, from afar, it looks like two people taking a very casual stroll through a garden, a very beautiful garden that she herself has cultivated. And you can't sense from the body language that there is hostility between these two characters and that one is a captive. And then he sits her down and he explains her fate to her. And it is just horrifying, particularly because it's a very calm sort of scene. He's very calm and measured in how he delivers that juxtaposed with how violent he gets with his own, I guess, Brother Dusk later on.

**Joel**

Right.

**Priya**

So I think that those two scenes kind of play off of each other in a very weird but very visually fascinating sort of way.

**Joel**

It's almost like that's what he does the best, is that kind of horrific torture. It's what he's built for, is to deliver that kind of a scene. Yeah, that one got me, too. I found that one really theatrical, well staged. I didn't think about it being her garden that she had cultivated and the perfect scene for her to have her downfall. Somebody made a joke on the Stars End podcast I thought was kind of funny. The moment when he turns his two fingers to indicate that this is the moment that he's having all these people killed.

They should have had somebody, some gardener in the distance, like fall from fall down or something.

**Priya**

All right, that would make sense.

**Joel**

Yeah. Because she knows all of them know her. So obviously they're going to have to get a new gardening staff after this.

**Priya**

But I just chalk that up to, like I would imagine he has cleared the space for this huge conversation that he's having.

**Joel**

Or the Shadow Master helped him with that.

**Priya**

Yeah. And that would be really I mean, it would be kind of like comic relief in the midst of a very intense scene.

**Joel**

Yeah. No, I don't think that would work.

**Priya**

Yeah. It would just be almost like slapstick at that point.

**Joel**

Yeah.

**Priya**

And my final thought on this was, how did Demerzel not know about this, tampering with the DNA? Because she seems to have her eyes on all things concerning Empire, and she in particular has sort of been the one to bring these Cleons into the world, in a sense, and sort of nurture them and be their robot mother, in a sense. So it just seems very implausible to me how she could have not known that their DNA had been tampered with, especially being a robot. I would imagine she possesses the capacity or the ability to be able to determine such things.



**Joel**

Well, my only theory on that would be we'll find out more in season two. One thing, but also I'm suspecting that maybe she did know, but it was part of her juggling so many different things that she was she was almost like a juggler who's got too many things, too many balls in the air, and then everything collapses.

**Priya**

Right. And as you had mentioned, there are these three laws of robotics, and I feel like something has to happen to that intelligence when so many of these programs are sort of in contradiction to one another. Like, so much of her programming is in contradiction to a lot of the original laws that were supposed to govern her. So I agree. She has, like, too much on her plate, essentially.

**Joel**

Yeah. Well, it'll be interesting to see where it goes, and it'll be really interesting to see how it plays out with the contamination of the apparently they're both contaminated now, Dusk and Day. So where does that go and where did the future Cleons go now? Are they going to develop, like, major idiosyncrasies? Are they going to start becoming real individuals?

**Priya**

I mean, we already kind of see that starting to happen, where Brother Day at the end of the scene, takes a giant hammer to the original Cleon. I don't know if it was like a preserved mummified corpse, but he seems like he's done with the whole thing. He's over it. He's over this whole legacy. He's over everything, because I guess now he has to face the fact that one, his legacy is gone because his legacy was in how he brought up the younger Brother Dawn. And then now to think that Brother Dawn was basically executed for being an anomaly and he too, is an anomaly now.

So it kind of creates this huge internal conflict, this huge existential crisis for him, and he's done.

**Joel**

It has to put him and Demerzel in total opposition now because he knows that Demerzel, if he is contaminated, why wouldn't Demerzel snap his neck at the first opportunity?

**Priya**

Exactly. Yeah. That's something that made me when she snaps Brother Dawn's neck, it made me think for a moment that maybe she doesn't know about the others also being contaminated, because she claimed that that was done by her because she is loyal to Empire. But I don't know. We'll see how this plays out in season two. It's really doing a lot of good set up, I think, for season two.

**Joel**

Right. I haven't heard a date yet when it's coming out. I think they've just about wrapped the filming, but I wouldn't be surprised if we hear in the next month or two that would track with when the first one came out. If it comes out in September or something, it would be nice. I don't want to wait much longer than that.

**Priya**

I know. Wishful thinking.

**Joel**

Okay, well, this has been a great conversation. Really happy you came on and I'm sure this will be entertaining for many of our listeners.

**Priya**

Yeah, thank you for having me on and this is really fun to discuss a show that I really enjoyed with someone else who also really enjoyed it and is a fan of Asimov's original work and can also appreciate the show. So, yeah, thank you for that great conversation.

**Joel**

Did you ever decide what happens next on Rehydrate?

**Priya**

Okay, so we've just completed the first three books from the Foundation series on our podcast and we are still in the process of determining what we are going to be working on next. But we will definitely be out with another series soon, so stay tuned for that.

**Joel**

Okay?

**Priya**

And again, the name of the podcast is Rehydrate and you can find it on Apple podcasts.

**Joel**

Okay, sounds great. Thank you for being here and we'll meet again somewhere online.

**Priya**

Yes, indeed.

**Joel**

Okay, bye Priya.

**Priya**

Bye.