

The Encyclopedists



[Opening theme music with voiceovers]

Anself haut Rodric

"And this city is all your world?"

Salvor Hardin

"We are a young world, your eminence."

Rodric

"You still have nuclear power."

Lewis Pireenne

"Space, man, have you no respect for science?"

Lord Dorwin

"A great achievement, this Encyclopedia of yours Hardin."

Hardin

"Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."

[Theme music plays out.]

Joel McKinnon

Before beginning this episode of Seldon Crisis, please be advised that this is an independently created podcast and is not meant to be a substitute for reading the books, nor is it affiliated with the family or estate of Isaac Asimov.

Joel

Hello friends, welcome back to Seldon Crisis, and another episode that truly warrants the title. In our last episode, the great Hari Seldon had been brought forth by the high officers of the ruling Commission of Public Safety, to defend his doleful prophecy of an imminent end to the great Galactic Empire that had stood for 12,000 years. In doing so, he had introduced the concept of psychohistory, a mathematical science of analysis of patterns of human behavior capable of revealing the future history of the human race for many thousands of years into the future with astonishing precision. He informed the commission that Trantor, the great, metal-encompassed capital planet of the Empire, would fall into ruins within a mere three centuries.

Seldon had been in danger of imminent execution and of his psychohistorical project being eliminated with him, but somehow managed to artfully maneuver the High Commissioner to arrange exile instead for him and his one hundred thousand colleagues.

They were to be sent to a distant, uninhabited planet named Terminus, at the far reaches of the galaxy, where, under the protection of the Emperor, they would begin the compilation of a great Encyclopedia Galactica which would contain the breadth of human knowledge and shorten the ensuing dark ages from thirty thousand years of human misery to a single millennium.

As we enter our next chapter in this saga, fifty years have passed and Seldon is long dead, and his employee Gaal Dornick has departed the scene as well. The action shifts to the frontier world of Terminus, where Seldon's hearty followers have built a new city and engaged in their great Encyclopedia Project.

They are only five years from publishing the first volume and a new volume is planned for publication every decade hence. The chief administrator of the planet is a hard nosed and humorless academic named Lewis Pirenne. He lives and breathes the Encyclopedia, and has little patience for the practicalities of governing the planet. This duty has fallen to a new figure whom we will get to know well for this and the following episode, the Mayor of Terminus City, Salvor Hardin.

A side note on Asimov's narrative style. It is often criticized as being insufficiently descriptive, and to be sure, we get very little information about physical characteristics of the main players, or the scenes they inhabit. Hardin, as important a character there is in this work, is introduced as "the broad figure of Salvor Hardin" and we don't get much else. Asimov prefers to allow the reader to form their own picture of these characters and much of it is dictated through their behavior and ideas. We will see that Hardin, like Seldon himself, has a personality and capabilities that allow him to stand out clearly against the backdrop of lesser characters.

Back to our story. Lewis Pirenne is busily working in his office when Hardin enters and we immediately see that they don't particularly like each other. Hardin has some very important news but is obliged to wait several minutes for Pirenne to pay him any attention, which he eventually achieves by tossing and catching a coin until the administrator can ignore it no longer.

Pirenne snaps at Hardin:

Pirenne

"Stop that!"

Joel

Hardin puts away the coin, attention now granted, and says:

Hardin

"Have you heard the news?"

Pirenne

"What news?"

Hardin

"The news that the Terminus City ultrawave set received two hours ago. The Royal Governor of the Prefect of Anacreon has assumed the title of king."

Pirenne

"Well? What of it?"

Joel

Hardin wearily explains that it means they are now cut off from the inner Empire, Anacreon being placed along a trade route connecting them with the capital by way of the planet Santanni.

Terminus is poor in metals and other resources and now will have to beg the new King for his cooperation in securing needed supplies. Hardin wants to call an emergency meeting of the Board of Trustees, from whom he is dependent for what little political power he has. Pirenne can't be bothered with such an interruption to his work.

Hardin let's him know he needs to be.

Hardin

"By the Emperor's left toe, Pirenne, this is a matter of life and death!"

Joel

Pirenne dismisses Hardin's concerns as the Emperor will protect them – he is bound to the terms of the contract to develop the Encyclopedia. Hardin explains that Pirenne puts too much faith in Imperial power. The Emperor has failed to stop Anacreon and at least twenty other prefects from breaking free.

Pirenne is not impressed with this argument and changes the subject. He is annoyed that Hardin's newspaper is hyping the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Foundation, and suggesting it be made the occasion for public holidays and quite inappropriate celebrations.

Hardin

"And why not? The computoclock will open the Vault in three months. I would call this first opening a big occasion, wouldn't you?"

Joel

The Vault to which he refers is a special chamber built to Hari Seldon's exact specifications in which further instructions would be provided by the holographic projection of Seldon himself at selected intervals. This will be the first occasion of its kind, and it is highly anticipated.

Finally, as Hardin is about to leave, he places another little news bomb with Pirenne and says:

Hardin

"A special envoy will be sent to us from Anacreon. In two weeks."

Pirenne

"What for?"

Hardin

"I give you one guess."

Joel

Hardin departs without awaiting an answer and so ends our first scene.

Two weeks pass and the emissary arrives and is introduced with the title of Anself haut Rodric, Sub-prefect of Pluema and Envoy Extraordinary of His Highness of Anacreon. We'll just call him Rodric for short. They go through a suitable amount of pomp and circumstance, including flipping blasters and presenting them butt forward for each other, while Hardin notes the bulge beneath Rodric's dress uniform indicating he remains armed, but calls no attention to the subterfuge.

They parade to Cyclopedia Square in Terminus City with suitably adoring crowds clapping and cheering (set up by Hardin no doubt).

Rodric says to his host:

Rodric

"And this city is all your world?"

Joel

Hardin responds:

Hardin

"We are a young world, your eminence. In our short history we have had but few members of the higher nobility visiting our poor planet. Hence, our enthusiasm."

Joel

Rodric comments upon the abundance of unoccupied land and wonders if they have considered dividing it into estates? It becomes clear that his home planet of Anacreon is highly stratified, with a feudal aristocracy and peasantry, while Terminus is a much more egalitarian society.

Hardin explains that, on Terminus, everyone is a scholar under the direct control of the Emperor, which evokes a disconcerting glance from Rodric.

The rest of the day is given to a tour of the Encyclopedia which Pirenne joyously rhapsodizes over, while Rodric looks vaguely unimpressed.

He skeptically asks:

Rodric

"This is all very interesting, but it seems a strange occupation for grown men. What good is it?"

Joel

Pirenne is too shocked to respond.

A ceremonial dinner follows, during which Rodric bombastically recounts his military exploits in the recent victory over the neighboring Kingdom of Smyrno. When the plates have been cleared, the cigars come out – high grade Vegan tobacco – now in short supply on Terminus. The time has come to discuss the serious matters at hand.

Pirenne makes it plain that nothing will change with respect to the Encyclopedia, as it is overseen by his August Majesty, the Emperor.

A rather tense argument follows, in which Rodric claims the Emperor is now irrelevant. He feigns concern that Terminus could be overtaken by Smyrno, which apparently still has some autonomy. He also claims that

a new treaty with the Empire allows them to maintain order over the Periphery, as the sector they now dominate is designated. He suggests that it might be necessary to protect Terminus, and that they have no desire to interfere with internal administration. Rodric proposes that Anacreon should establish a military base which would need to be supported by those it would be protecting.

Hardin says:

Hardin

"Now we're getting to the nub. Let's put it into language. Terminus is to be a protectorate and to pay tribute."

Joel

Pirenne interjects:

Pirenne

"I care nothing about Anacreon, Smyrno, or any other political matters. This is a state-supported tax-free institution!"

Joel

To which Rodric replies with a sneer:

Rodric

"State-supported? But we are the State, Dr. Pirenne, and we're not supporting."

Joel

Hardin asks:

Hardin

"...and how would you take these so-called taxes, your eminence? Would you take them in kind... wheat, potatoes, vegetables, cattle?"

Joel

Rodric shows only contempt.

Rodric

"We've got hefty surpluses. Gold, of course. Chromium or vanadium would be even better, incidentally, if you have it in quantity."

Joel

Hardin has to inform the envoy about how poor Terminus is in metals - that they even use steel for currency, showing him the coin he had been flipping as our story began.

Pirenne returns to his only subject of concern. He considers the whole discussion pointless, as Terminus is preparing a great encyclopedia.

Pirenne

"Space, man, have you no respect for science?"

Joel

Rodrik is dryly amused.

Rodric

"Encyclopedias don't win wars."

Joel

Pirenne is again stunned into silence, and Rodric goes on to note that, given their lack of resources, Terminus will have to provide land for their nobility.

Hardin adds an apparently innocuous question.

Hardin

"Could Anacreon supply us with adequate quantities of plutonium for our nuclear-power plant? We've only a few years supply left."

Joel

Rodric is caught off-guard.

Rodric

"You still have nuclear power?"

Hardin

"Certainly. What's unusual in that? I imagine nuclear power is fifty thousand years old now. Why shouldn't we have it? Except that it's a little difficult to get plutonium."

Joel

After Rodric departs Pirenne whirls on Hardin.

Pirenne

"May I ask what you meant by blowing off your mouth about our nuclear-power plant? Why, it's just the thing that would make us a military target."

Hardin

"Yes. A military target to stay away from. Isn't it obvious why I brought the subject up? It happened to confirm a very strong suspicion I had had."

Pirenne

"And that was what?"

Hardin

"That Anacreon no longer has a nuclear-power economy. If they had, our friend would undoubtedly have realized that plutonium, except in ancient tradition, is not used in power plants. And therefore it follows that the rest of the Periphery no longer has nuclear power either. Certainly Smyrno hasn't, or Anacreon wouldn't have won most of the battles in their recent war. Interesting, wouldn't you say?"

Joel

Pirenne leaves the scene fuming, while Hardin muses.

Hardin

"Back to oil and coal, are they?"

Joel

Some time later – days perhaps – the Board of Trustees is meeting and Hardin has been granted an unprecedented invitation. He has used the newspaper he controls to mount a campaign for his inclusion, to which Pirenne has reluctantly agreed.

The four other members of the board are introduced, but we only need mention the rather silent member, Jord Fara. Asimov likes to use this device of a quiet but significant voice when it does speak. Recall the High Commissioner in our previous episode. Be ready for Fara to fill this role when his moment arrives.

The obvious topic of discussion is the new Anacreon menace, and in particular, of a suddenly announced surprise visit of the Emperor's representative, a certain Lord Dorwin. Pirenne is convinced that Dorwin's visit will smooth out the concerns with their belligerent neighbor, but Hardin sees a darker reality. He knows that the Emperor really has no ability to control affairs now. If he had, Anacreon would scarcely have been able to declare their independence and expand their sphere of influence.

Hardin admonishes the board.

Hardin

"Great space! What is this? Every once in a while someone mentions "Emperor" or "Empire" as if it were a magic word. The Emperor is thousands of parsecs away and I doubt he gives a damn about us. And if he does, what can he do? What there was of the imperial navy in these regions is in the hands of the four kingdoms now and Anacreon has its share. Listen, we have to fight with guns, not with words."

Joel

He explains that his nuclear weapons bluff has given them a couple of months grace. Anacreon will soon realize the truth, that Terminus uses nuclear power only for commercial uses.

Pirenne still holds sway over the board, and he reminds them that the only concern they can and should have is for the Encyclopedia. This is what Seldon had presented to them as their only concern. He reminds Hardin that they are scientists foremost.

Hardin scoffs:

Hardin

"That's a nice hallucination, isn't it? What kind of science is it to be stuck out here for centuries classifying the work of scientists of the last millennium? Have you ever thought of working onward, extending their knowledge and improving upon it? No! You're quite happy to stagnate. The whole Galaxy is, and has been for space knows how long. That's why the Periphery is revolting; that's why communications are breaking down; that's why petty wars are becoming eternal; that's why whole systems are losing nuclear power and going back to barbarous techniques of chemical power. If you ask me, the Galactic Empire is dying!"

Joel

Now Jord Fara, our quiet friend, makes his entrance to the discussion – referring to the upcoming anniversary of the Foundation's founding, and asks:

Jord Fara

"Have you ever considered what might be in the Vault?"

Joel

Pirenne is impatient.

Pirenne

"I don't know. Routine matters. A stock speech of congratulations, perhaps. I don't think any significance need be placed on the Vault."

Joel

But Fara presses his point.

Fara

"In fact, you all seem to forget that Seldon was the greatest psychologist of our time and that he was the founder of our Foundation. It seems reasonable to assume that he used his science to determine the probable course of the history of the immediate future. If he did, as seems likely, I repeat, he would certainly have managed to find a way to warn us of the danger and, perhaps, to point out a solution. The Encyclopedia was very dear to his heart, you know."

Joel

Hardin is silent, but intrigued by Fara's comments. He had once studied psychology but had given it up for politics, a way he saw of applying it in practice. He thought about Seldon's use of psychohistory to predict the far off future and realized he must have understood the situation they would be in after a mere fifty years fairly accurately. What could that mean?

The day arrives shortly for the arrival of Lord Dorwin, the Emperor's representative and he is quite a character. He actually gets a fair amount of physical description from Asimov, "Long hair, curled intricately and, quite obviously artificially, to which were added a pair of fluffy, blond sideburns, which he fondled affectionately." Besides the picture we get, Dorwin has a nearly constant habit of taking snuff, which he constantly offers without any real desire to share, and pinches it from his elaborately carved snuff box at frequent intervals. He also has a speech impediment which results in the inability to say his r's. I think this is all to portray him as a decadent dandy, probably inbred and not particularly intelligent. Hardin takes an immediate dislike to him.

He finds Dorwin with Pirenne, reviewing the work completed thus far by the Foundation, and fawning over it.

Dorwin

"A gweat achievement, this Encyclopedia of yoahs, Hahdin. A feat, indeed, to rank with the most majestic accomplishments of all time."

Joel

Pirenne preens, while Hardin moves to discuss the threat from Anacreon. Dorwin is uninterested and thinks they are not a concern as they are "thowoughly bahbawous", to which Hardin replies that:

Hardin

"...they have all the elementary requirements for warfare and all the fundamental necessities for destruction."

Joel

Then an interesting digression – Dorwin has a pet interest in "ahchaeology" and the "owigin" question. This is in reference to an odd fact regarding the historical knowledge of the galaxy in regard to the spread of humanity. There is general consensus that the human species originated on a single planet, but none on exactly where this planet was, other than that it was likely in the Sirius sector. Among the candidates, though apparently not a leading one, is the Sol system. Dorwin is himself intrigued at the possibility that the actual origin was in the Arcturan system. He's a big fan of one archaeologist with that view and has read his works extensively, written some eight hundred years previously.

Hardin asks why Dorwin doesn't go there himself to investigate?

Dorwin is surprised.

Dorwin

"How insuffewably cwude it would be to go to Ahctuwus, oah to Sol, foah instance, and blundah about, when the old mastahs have covahed the gwound so much moah effectually than we could possibly hope to do."

Hardin

"I see."

Joel

Responds Hardin. One can almost imagine the eyeroll.

There is a bit more conversation on matters at hand. Hardin is interested in rumors of a power plant disaster on Planet V of Gamma Andromeda. Dorwin confirms it was catastrophic and resulted in extensive radiation damage. He implies the imperial government will begin restricting the use of such technologies. When informed that the Periphery has apparently abandoned use of nuclear technology Dorwin is not surprised because of how "bawbawus" these worlds have become. Hardin points out how these worlds were comparatively recently quite highly civilized, but Dorwin waives him off and changes the subject.

A few days later Dorwin has returned to Trantor and the Board of Trustees is convening with Hardin in attendance, though he suspects they've been meeting secretly without him one or more times. The occasion of this meeting is a new message from Anacreon, which clearly amounts to an ultimatum. They have been given only one week to agree to the harsh terms proposed by Rodric.

Pirenne is shocked. Surely there must be a loophole. The Emperor will protect them!

Hardin has a new angle on things; something he calls symbolic logic. He claims that it is a science that can prune away all sorts of clogging deadwood that clutters up human language. He has a friend who specializes in this science and has asked him to analyze the new message from Anacreon and the net result is what they had all expected, boiling down to "You give us what we want in a week, or we take it by force."

He has also taken the time to have his friend analyze the treaty that lays out the terms of the new legal arrangement between the Empire and Anacreon. Here the result is not only surprising, but alarming: "Obligations of Anacreon to the Empire: None! Powers of the Empire over Anacreon: None!"

But what of the assurances of the honorable Lord Dorwin in his recent visit, asks one of the Trustees? Hardin had been anticipating this question. During the entire visit he had surreptitiously recorded every utterance Lord Dorwin had made and then had this analyzed as well. Gasps of horror from the board erupt. But that's illegal! The impropriety!

Hardin shrugs.

Hardin

"After eliminating meaningless statements, vague gibberish, useless qualification – in short, all the goo and dribble – he found there was nothing left. Everything canceled out. Lord Dorwin, gentlemen, in five days of discussion didn't say one damned thing, and said it so you never noticed. There are the assurances you had from your precious Empire."

Joel

The Trustees are shaken, and reluctantly agree that Anacreon must be given permission to establish their military bases. Hardin wants to know how they will kick them out at the first opportunity?

He is accused by the board of having made up his mind that violence cannot be avoided, to which he responds with what will become his most famous statement and one we will hear more than once in future episodes:

Hardin

"Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."

Joel

Jord Fara, our taciturn friend, stands to speak. He makes the point that they are forgetting the opening of the Vault in six days. He insists that upon this occasion Hari Seldon will provide instructions for how they might escape their present predicament.

This pushes Hardin over the edge and he goes ballistic.

Hardin

"First, you refused to admit that there was a menace at all! Then you reposed an absolutely blind faith in the Emperor! Now you've shifted it to Hari Seldon. Throughout you have invariably relied on authority or on the past – never on yourselves."

Joel

He continues to attribute this attitude to responsibility for the fall of Empire throughout the galaxy. He brings up Dorwin's absurd notion of scientific research depending entirely on the work of the old masters.

Hardin

"Don't you see? It's Galaxy-wide. It's a worship of the past. It's a deterioration – a stagnation!"

Joel

The meeting wraps up leaving Hardin pondering the mysterious reasons why Seldon would not have included any psychohistorians among the settlers of Terminus. He wonders if perhaps a psychohistorian would have caught on too soon to what was happening. Being so blind in this way they've only caught glimpses of where they were heading, which was apparently what Seldon had wanted.

A very short scene follows in which Hardin discusses his plans with his most trusted subordinate, Yohan Lee, whom we will meet again in our next episode. They will have to seize control of the authority to manage matters going forward. He is troubled at taking this step, beyond the obvious political risk. What if he is wrong and Seldon only cared about the Encyclopedia as Pirenne and the board are so convinced? Perhaps it would be better to yield to Anacreon and hope to persuade them of the value of continuing their work? Who was he to try to outguess the greatest thinker of the age? What would be revealed in the Vault after all? He hadn't slept much lately. If only he was truly confident he was making the right move.

At last, the momentous day arrives and the five members of the Board of Trustees are in the Vault, awaiting the tick of the clock that will activate the chamber in the center of the room. Hardin sits at some distance from them and tensely awaits as, in Asimov's words somewhere a computer was spitting off instants of time toward that precise moment when a muon stream would flow, a connection be made and- The lights went dim!

A figure now occupies the center of the chamber, an old man in a wheelchair closing a book and placing it upon his lap.

Hari Seldon

"I am Hari Seldon."

Joel

He apologizes for his condition – in the time since their grandparents left for Terminus he has suffered an inconvenient paralysis. He tells whoever may be present that they may sit down, and, with a gentle smile says:

Seldon

"... if you care to smoke, I wouldn't mind. Why should I? I'm not really here."

Joel

His tone becomes more serious.

Seldon

"It is fifty years now since this Foundation was established – fifty years in which the members of the Foundation have been ignorant of what it was they were working toward. It was necessary that they be ignorant, but now the necessity is gone."

"The Encyclopedia Foundation, to begin with, is a fraud, and always has been!"

Joel

In the Vault, Hardin hears sounds of confusion, scrambling, muffled exclamations.

Seldon goes on to say that he never cared if a single volume of the Encyclopedia would ever be published. It had served its purpose of extracting an Imperial Charter from the Emperor and attracting the hundred thousand humans necessary for the scheme, and by it managed to keep them preoccupied while events shaped themselves, until it was too late for any of them to draw back.

Seldon

"In the fifty years that you have worked on this fraudulent project – there is no use in softening phrases – your retreat has been cut off, and you have now no choice but to proceed on the infinitely more important project that was, and is, our real plan."

Joel

He informs his hidden audience that they have been maneuvered to a point where they lack freedom of action. Now the path they must take is inevitable.

Seldon

"You will be faced with a series of crises, as you are now faced with the first, and in each case your freedom of action will become similarly circumscribed so that you will be forced along one, and only one, path."

Joel

He confirms Hardin's view that Galactic civilization has stagnated and declined without most noticing. Now the Periphery is breaking away.

Seldon

"Somewhere in the fifty years just past is where the historians of the future will place an arbitrary line and say: 'This marks the Fall of the Galactic Empire.'"

Joel

He describes what we learned in the first episode, that psychohistory reveals that the galaxy will fall into ruin and a dark age of 30,000 years will begin, but that it can be shortened to only 1000 years through the work of the Foundation. It was essential that none of the humans on Terminus were aware of these details, for that would open up too many additional variables and become greater than psychology could handle.

Seldon

"But this I can tell you: Terminus and its companion Foundation at the other end of the Galaxy are seeds of the renaissance and the future founders of the Second Galactic Empire. And it is the present crisis that is starting Terminus off to that climax."

Joel

Seldon summarizes the situation of which they are already so aware. They are cut off from the galactic center, surrounded by stronger neighbors, an island of nuclear power in a growing ocean of more primitive energy; but helpless because of the lack of metals.

Seldon

"You see, then, that you are faced by hard necessity, and that action is forced on you. The nature of that action – that is, the solution to your dilemma – is obvious!"

Joel

And then, with a few rousing words about an eventual new and greater Empire, Seldon's image vanishes.

Pirenne looks at Hardin, utterly defeated, and informs him that the board will be consulting with him as to the next move. Hardin realizes that by now his coup has been completed and he will now be in charge. Though

Anacreon will be landing their spaceships tomorrow, he is sure that they will be defeated within six months. The solution to this first crisis, as Seldon had said, was obvious.

And so it ends with a cliffhanger. There's an interesting discontinuity evident in the conclusion of this episode and the beginning of the next. Hardin states that the solution is obvious, and clearly has some stratagem that will solve the crisis in short order. As the next episode commences, however, you will find that thirty years have passed. Hardin is the only major player remaining from the events of this first major story. He remains the Mayor of Terminus, while the Anacreonians, though not based on Terminus, still seem to hold the balance of power and remain a major existential threat. What was this obvious solution and why does it leave the larger problem unaddressed?

At first I'd thought that Asimov had lost the plot here a bit, but later realized he had this pretty well sketched out. The "solution" Hardin refers to becomes evident a fairly short way into our next episode. There are, however, occasional errors of continuity within the larger epic, especially as we get into the later volumes written almost three decades after the core trilogy. I think they are inevitable due to the time gap in his writing, but also due to the style with which he composed. He claimed to never use an outline. A concept would come to him and he would immediately begin to write the story. Scenes and characters would materialize as needed as the story unfolded. Sometimes this results in minor logic and timeline confusion that we can forgive, as it seems a small price to pay for the overall masterpiece produced.

Asimov spoke often about his pure love of writing and storytelling. He was said to have despised vacations. That's what people do who need a break from their work, he would say. He was only truly happy when isolated with his typewriter enjoying the process of working out a story. I believe

that one of the things that makes Asimov's stories so magical and full of surprises is that he was really entertaining himself.

An astute reader or listener may recall a contradiction within our first two episodes, this one coming from the great master Hari Seldon. Recall that he had said about his apparent bluff that Linge Chen would die within a year if he were to order his execution. I never lie about the findings of Psychohistory. Well, we now know that was a damn lie because he was happy to have the 100,000 members of the Encyclopedia Project move to a new planet and commit their lives to a project he knew to be utterly fraudulent. I don't see this as an example of Asimov changing his plans on the fly - though I suppose it's possible. I think he had no problem with allowing Hari Seldon to tell a giant whopper if it served his needs in trying to save humanity 29,000 years of misery. Seldon was very much an "ends justify the means" kind of guy.

As we open the next episode we will find that Salvor Hardin is faced with a slew of new problems. The Foundation is once again under existential threat, and Hardin's job is also threatened from within. A new faction, the Actionist Party, is gaining traction under a firebrand political opponent determined to unseat him. Hardin and the Foundation have found a unique solution to maintaining the balance of power within the Periphery, but it appears extremely precarious.

Meanwhile... on Anacreon... a young ruler is about to take the throne, and a shadowy figure has dark plans for power as well - plans that appear to threaten the Foundation with imminent destruction.

I hope you're enjoying the story as much as I am, and will join me for our next episode of Seldon Crisis "The Mayors." Until then, enjoy life and, may I suggest if you can, find some time to read Asimov in his own words.

By now you're used to podcast hosts asking their listeners to complete a series of actions for the benefit of increasing the listener base such as subscribing, reviewing and rating the show... all that jazz. I'm going to instead ask just one favor. If you like what you're hearing and intend to continue listening, please think about one friend or acquaintance that might enjoy it as well, and share the link to the show. I don't expect to get thousands of listeners overnight, but I don't want anyone who loves – or could love – this story, to miss out on a unique way of appreciating it.