

## JUST ANOTHER DAY UNDER GLOBAL CORP

February 16, 2059

18:00 hours

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**D**espite all of the lights, the Earth had never been a darker place. Every hour of every day, from 04:30 in the morning until 20:00 hours at night, almost every room, building, and road in every city across the globe was lit by broadcast screens, providing all of the information that the Global Corporation of Earth felt was necessary or uplifting for its citizens, most of whom merely wanted to survive another night. The glow of the screens and the constant stream of information was part of life for those trying to find food and shelter for their families in the overcrowded cities of the world, cities whose ranks and numbers swelled like the bloated bodies that had to be carried out of them each day. Every city above the nine meter water mark now held a portion of the coastal migrants who raced inland like locust, trying to escape the series of glacial shelf collapses that flooded the coast during the last decade, searching for food, water, and spreading disease in their wake.

On this particular February evening, the sun setting on some cursed cities while it rose on others across the planet, things were about to change. Not the rapid change, like when a person spiked a fever from the Avian flu pandemic that was raging across the globe, where, within three days, your body lay burning up, choking on its own fluids, until your dead carcass was disposed of into the metal belly of a body hauler, making its daily pass through the city to carry the dead away from the living. No, and not the slow change of eons, with mountains rising and falling as a species adapted and evolved. No, this was the kind of change that would mean something to everyone still alive, and it all started with all of the Global Corp screens going dark.

With the darkness and silence came the initial panic of another blackout; those too often happened these days with the pandemic, and everyone quickly looked around to figure out what was happening. The screens, whether personal or public, rarely stopped spouting their Global Corp propaganda, yet everything else that was powered by electricity continued to run, and just like that, everyone knew: it had to be another damn announcement by Global Corp.

The hungry and agitated crowds of people, in every walk of life, across every city, waited and watched for the message to appear. There was no real hope that anything important would be said; there was little hope living within the Global Corp citizens who were crammed into every available spot between the low rises, between the high rises, along the old walkways, and in every other available space besides the roads themselves, which worked as both as pedestrian walk ways and the roads for the daily body haulers and the troopers, patrolling the city passageways, watching and waiting for uncontrolled outbreaks of plague or violence.

Even with the lack of hope, decades of habit caused most of the people look at the screens when they came back to life; in the buildings, trollies and homes, the sheer number of screens made avoiding them all but impossible, but regardless of where they were, nobody was overly excited to see Global Corp President, Amir Kana, standing behind the Global Corp podium, ringed by images of the twelve provincial representatives:

“Citizens of Global Corp, as you know, these last two years have been some of the most difficult in our history. There is not one of us who has not been impacted by the flooding waters of the oceans, not one of us that has not been touched by the hand of avian-influenza outbreak. Together these evils plague our lives and threaten our very existence.

We understand that these are trying times, and we, as your representatives, are doing everything in our power to restore both order and prosperity to our world. It is in this hope, that we now create and empower the brightest minds of our generation to combat this evil. Therefore, under General Order #1289, your Global Corp representatives have unanimously agreed to establish The Earth Relief Committee.

This new Committee, made up of your twelve regional representatives, has been given the marshal authority to study this epidemic and eradicate it by all means necessary, thereby ensuring that humanity will once again grow and prosper. We must all have faith in knowing that, just like we have conquered the moon, and soon the stars, the same power and force will be brought to bear on this fight before us now.

Rest assured, The Earth Relief Committee will use all the power and knowledge that we possess in order to save humanity from these terrible times. Believe in each other, believe in Global Corp, and we will all grow and prosper as we work to put humanity first.”

The Global Corp emblem flashed across the screen and then went black before the regular propaganda came back on to fill the emptiness of screens, telling the masses about everything that was going on with the lunar construction site and the completion of the third spaceship: Mars III, the first colonization and mining ship that would be sent to start the terraforming and colonization efforts on Mars itself. After describing the continued need for materials to be sent up to the moon for future construction projects, the spokesperson for the lunar base started to explain how the new technology in terraforming was also being applied the help citizens of Earth, with the first ever fully environmentally controlled city built in Chongqing, as the new home of Global Corp.

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Luke O'Malley rolled away from the images of the new "spaceship" city that was visible outside the plate glass window of the old storefront building, burying himself into the pile of rags and tattered blankets where he slept among more than two hundred homeless migrants that crammed into the old storefront building each night to share the warmth of each other's company. In truth, these migrants also shared the same dirt, grime and air that spread the avian flu that took the last of Luke's family, his younger sister, last week, but it was still better than freezing to death; *hell, if this is humanity growing and prospering*, Luke thought bitterly, *I might as well go outside and give up the ghost right now*, but he rolled over, pulled up the ratty covers, and entering into the haunted thoughts about his life. He found himself thinking about his father, working as a scrap collector under Global Corps Resources Management Act, an act that stripped the resources from every rural community and sent them to be processed for the new rail lines and the space program; he remembered being sent to the new "Training Facility," when he was twelve, and he vividly remembered being kicked out at eighteen for fighting; Luke came back to his family in Worcester, right before the pandemic hit and took his family with it, but he'd show them all; he'd make something of himself in this world, no matter the cost.

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Twenty miles west of what had been the capital of the United States, at least before the Global Corp took charge and the rising waters drowned the once great city, newly appointed Major General Abraham Reeves shut off his command portal, exited his armored vehicle, turned his back on the rioting and violence that was continuing in the city of Front Royal, and surveyed the skyline in

front of him, now smoldering in the twilight lit sky; Reeves didn't care about the announcement he just heard or who he reported to in the future, so long as whoever was in charge understood what was really going on, and so long as they let him run his operations as he saw fit. As it was, Reeves knew, he'd be working overtime to clean up this mess and get things running smoothly again. An explosion rocked across the city block, way too close behind him for comfort, and General Reeves turned, thinking, *this was an unacceptable location for a command center; I should swing my team around to the Eastern foothills to command a better vantage point*, and he climbed back up into the command vehicle to issue the necessary orders.

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Outside the cafeteria at the Amherst Training Center, Paul Hadi took a deep breath and reflected on the announcement from Global Corp: *it is true! The Earth has to be facing something akin to God's wrath if Global Corp is handing over the reins*. Deep down he knew that something like this was coming for a while, merely from the activity and meetings held by the training center's provincial representative, Avery White: *how will this change effect my students*, he wondered, as he turned and went back into the cafeteria to sit with them and discuss the news and their thoughts about it. *God's wrath*, he thought, as the automated doors sealed behind him, *maybe it would be better if students still believed in such things*.

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Mary Kemmler found the interruption to her study annoying: *of course a committee of educated representatives should have control of this situation*, she thought, trying to focus on the culmination of

the last seven years of studying new approaches to eco-symbiotic sustainable building designs. *Hell, nobody would have any food at all if it weren't for science*, and she turned back to her screens to start dealing with the outline of her doctoral project, hoping to finish up so that she could prepare for the class she taught in the morning. She needed to pick one of the two ideas that everyone in her field of study was completing: Sustainable Cities or Terraform Cities. Both ideas were interesting for same reason and both were essentially the same in her mind, which would make it difficult deciding; *maybe*, she thought, *I could combine both and come up with something even better for this failing planet and set myself apart by doing so*, getting so caught up in the idea that she worked through the night into the dawn.

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Sitting in the back study of The Sacred Heart of Saint Francis church, the wood stove bellowing out heat to block out the coldness of the night, Jude smiled at the news that interrupted his work, looking down at the title of his notes for his next sermon: Finding God's way in the world of Global Corp. He smiled at his own insightfulness, nodding his head slowly in acceptance of the important role he would play during these dark times. With a deep breath filling his large frame, he reached across his notes, grabbing the goblet he liked to use, and took a long sip of the homemade beer before setting down the empty cup heavily on the table and flicking through the pages of the bible. *Where are you*, he thought to himself, angrily searching the pages for a passage about the "Unclean," that was running through his mind. Then he scoffed at the book, closing it with a slap before typing what he could remember of the passage into his tablet in order to find it and then jotting it down to support his thoughts on this plague that was ravaging most of the world.

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In the environmentally autonomous capital city of Chongqing, the Global Corp executive board was quite happy with their decision to place the burden of this problem on the training centers, as they adjourned early and all went about the opulent and extravagant lives that they earned through their hereditary profit shares.

