

American Calamity is a fictitious dystopian page-turner that shows an eerie picture of what could come to be in the near post-apocalyptic future and the choices many Americans would be forced to make in order to survive. Could you?

American Calamity

By Edward S. Pocock III

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EDWARD S. POCKOCK III

AMERICAN
CALAMITY



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PROLOGUE

The following is the last part of a speech allegedly delivered in December 2005, by Comrade Chi Haotian, the Vice-Chairman of China's Military Commission to top officers and generals.

“... Only by using non-destructive weapons that can kill many people will we be able to retain America for ourselves.

There has been rapid development of modern biological technology and new bioweapons. We have not been idle. In the past years we have seized the opportunity to master weapons of this kind. We can achieve our purpose of 'cleaning up' America, the central committee believes, if we resolve the United States problem in one blow; our domestic problems will be readily solved. Therefore, our military battle preparation will seem aimed at Taiwan, but in fact it is aimed at the United States. The preparation is far beyond the scope of attacking aircraft carriers or satellites. Marxism states that violence is the midwife for the birth of the new society. Therefore, war is the midwife for the birth of China's century.”

All the Chinese needed to do was find our weak spot and do to us what President Reagan did to the USSR. The Chinese assessment didn't take long. America's underbelly is GREED. China just needed to feign interest in Western governing practices while executing their plan, a plan not restricted by four-year Presidential terms.

The Chinese Superiority Plan

1. Establish contact and end the isolation (1972),
2. Normalize relations (1979),
3. Enter the worldwide market (2001),
4. Ensure China leverages its resources to the fullest to achieve dominance (2009),
5. Grow our intelligence to equal or exceed the West (2014),
6. Be the worldwide economic power (2019),
7. Create a modern armed force (2021),
8. Destroy their enemies from within, and in the end,
9. Eliminate or subjugate them.

This was an amazingly straightforward plan of actionable events. The United States was about to find out how good their planning was. Item 8 was next on the agenda.

CHAPTER 1: EVERYTHING HAS A BEGINNING

FEBRUARY 2053 Andover, Maine

The “wop-wop” eggbeater noise of the old Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk normally put First Lieutenant (LT) Edward P. Tooley asleep on trips, but not today. General Jeffrey P. Adcock, Commander of 5th Mountain Corps of the Continental Army, had him on a continental tour of the old United States, now divided in pieces after decades of fighting and misery. Today, he was going to meet a legend.

Tooley’s purpose was to document the history of the Continental Army, namely, the period between 2022 and 2050. The Continental North American Government (CNAG) seemed eager for this, too. All part of some larger negotiations to take place in 2055. Two other lieutenants and one new captain had the same assignment. At the mission’s conclusion, the four of them would meet to agree upon the most accurate assessment. There was one glaring exception. Only Tooley would visit General Stephen T. Moore, Commander of the 3rd New England Corps of the Continental Army. General Adcock noted that General Moore didn’t like to repeat himself—period. Internally, Tooley wondered, *Why me? What’s the play here?*

Tooley’s interview with General Jamie Hernandez, Commander of the 1st Republic of Texas Corps was mostly about the war with Mexico and Mexican cessationists. It was a fun but short interview. General Zachary Waller, Commander of the 4th Army of the South, was the epitome of a southern

gentleman. He spent a lot of time discussing the newly formed State of Reparations and his involvement in the Cuban engagement. This provided a great deal of information from 2024 onward. Regarding the events of 2022 and 2023, they all said the same thing: “General Moore is the person to talk with.” They all held deep reverence for General Moore.

General Roger T. Otis, Commander of 2nd Appalachian Corps, was Tooley’s last visit before setting off for General Moore’s home. General Otis, like the others, had many recollections of battles post-2023, but little prior to that date they wanted to discuss. The day Tooley left Otis’s West Virginia HQ, Otis tapped Tooley’s front pocket which contained a notepad, “Don’t forget what General Adcock wrote, lad.”

How in the hell did he know what was in my notepad? Tooley thought. Now he was in an ancient Sikorsky helicopter, flying to a place called Andover, Maine. The long four-hour flight wasn’t their biggest worry; it was the impending snowstorm that watchers reported. They needed to leave at daybreak. With two layovers for fuel, the pilot expected to arrive around noon.

Five hours later, the old chopper began to bank right a bit. Tooley knew they were getting close. He could see that the chopper holding his luggage was following, making the same banking maneuver. They were running about an hour late. The pilot came over the headset, “Landing in five minutes, Lieutenant, thirteen hundred hours. We are just missing a heck of an inbound snowstorm. We were informed ground transport would be waiting for you.”

Awful lot of expense to move me around, Tooley thought. This history project must be important. He knew that fuel, choppers, and pilots were critical mission use only now. This was an exceedingly rare treat. Thoughts wandered through his brain as the helicopters landed on a small heliport site.

Loaded onto two waiting Humvees, Tooley found that the ride was only ten minutes. The driver, a private, asked him, “Hope you brought your arctics. There’s a humdinger comin’ in, Lieutenant!” Tooley looked out the window and could see the ground crews moving the Sikorsky into hangars. *Is that a Chinook?* Tooley said to himself as the doors opened to the hangars. He was impressed by what he saw, a well-oiled machine of men and women. He rechecked his new issue dress uniform and found everything in order. *To the nines* was Tooley’s self-evaluation.

Assessing the landscape, he was awestruck by the beauty here. Even though the trees were bare, the westerly mountain vistas around this area were amazing. He let his thoughts wander to the descriptions said of Stephen T. Moore. General Moore was an “order guy” according to General Otis. “Don’t make a shitty first impression,” was General Adcock’s stern warning. “Moore, you will learn, he forgets nothing,” General Hernandez said. These men were all close but functioned as though they rarely talked. *Horseshit, these gentlemen had something cooking.*

The private pulled through an opening in a stone wall with barely enough room for the wide Humvee to clear the granite posts. The sharp turn jarred Tooley back to the present. It was a gravel driveway leading to a grand house with white clapboards, green shutters, and a green standing seam roof. The

structure was massive. It looked like a large Federal box style house common in New England. It was connected to a nearly equally sized addition by way of an ell. On the ell was a porch. Standing there were his hosts, General Moore and his wife, Ann.

Lieutenant Tooley's first impression of the General was that of an older man, not skinny, certainly not fat, just older. He was a big guy, a little over six feet tall, balding, and clean shaven. His uniform was of the original Continental Army, a forest green jacket with matching pants. General Otis, Tooley recalled, said they were "Filson's made," a company that existed ages ago. General Moore's outfit seemed in near perfect condition. The jacket contained only two blackened stars on each epaulette and a single subdued medallion on his left breast pocket. *Old school*, Tooley thought.

Approaching the porch, Tooley and General Moore exchanged salutes. "Welcome to our home, Lieutenant Tooley," General Moore said warmly.

"Thank you, sir, afternoon, ma'am."

Ann smiled, "Pleasure to meet you. Our boys here *<looking at two privates that just came from the barns across the way>* will take your things to your bed chamber. I have you *<looking at Tooley>* and the General set up in the lodge." And like that, Ann was off. Ann, Tooley admired, was shaped like his mom, complete with blue eyes and blonde hair. Ann's mere presence brought back memories of his mother.

"Get caught up at Westfield?" Moore asked, looking at Tooley.

Tooley was lost in his thoughts, the question surprising him. “Yes, sir. Fuel.”

“I was afraid of that. General Waller is working on shipping a load up from the Gulf. Up here, we are down to near vapors. Settle in, Lieutenant. We can meet after dinner in the lodge and get started,” the General suggested, curious to see his response.

“I am very interested to hear about things from the very beginning, General. Few can provide even meager details on events prior to 2023.”

Eager kid, Stephen observed. “I’ll do just that, Lieutenant Tooley. We’ll start before things really went sideways. In history, there is really no such thing as instant pudding, Lieutenant.”

“Uh, yes sir. What’s instant pudding?”

Pushing air out of his nose in a puff, Stephen smiled, thinking to himself, *This is going to be fun*. Minutes after enjoying a wonderful dinner of lamb, Tooley was eager to get to work.

25 FEBRUARY 2022 MOORE RESIDENCE, South Farmington, Connecticut

“BREAKING NEWS” glared across the chyron of news stations around the world. Given the propensity of every news outlet—and that is a subjective term—to overuse the “breaking news” flash line, one had to wonder what was happening this

time. “Yakov Zhukov possibly dead, the victim of an assassin’s bullet,” it read. This occurring just days after the Beijing Olympics ended. Things appeared to be winding down between Russia and Ukraine. Now this. A Ukrainian national, what’s left of him, flashed on the screen. Russian evidence that after Zhukov’s death, the perpetrator’s capture was prompt, mere seconds after the shot. Funny, no one was confirming Yakov Zhukov’s death. The film just showed him collapsing from the shot.

Russian troops, who were already massing on the border with enough firepower to obliterate the Ukrainian armed forces, now entered Ukraine. State sponsored assassination was the reason they gave for the invasion. “Any Hope of Minsk II Agreement Gone” read the chyron. Where’s Zhukov? Dead bodies sell causes. The only dead body so far was the sap shown as Zhukov’s killer. Either his body was a mess or, quite possibly, Zhukov returned from “death” like some comic book character.

While the situation in Ukraine unfolded, the sixty-nine-year-old Xiang Ling, leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and de facto life president of China, summoned the world’s press in another breaking news announcement. A major news conference was scheduled in Beijing, only days after the initial Russian invasion of Ukraine. More specifically, the Chinese Foreign Ministry demanded the worldwide press to heel, and, of course, they all came running.

Most expected a tiptoeing around the Ukrainian situation. They also thought it possibly might be Xiang’s announcement that Taiwan best prepare for a similar fate as Ukraine. In any

case, it was a “shall attend event regardless of one’s political leanings.”

What they received was completely unexpected.

Xiang strolled to the podium within the International Conference Hall, inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Beijing. He wore his modified Mao suit. The Chinese described it as a pseudo-traditional Tangzhuang jacket with straight collars in drab gray. The hall contained 671 seats and not one was vacant. The time was Friday, 4p in Beijing. Xiang was an hour late. Given the situation that was now worsening in Ukraine, Xiang had a very captive audience.

The room, even while packed with cameras, recorders, and people, drifted into a sort of humming silence as Xiang made himself comfortable on the podium. He was the focal point of the show. He surrounded himself with all the splendor he could muster, copying the communist pomp and circumstance playbook. It was a scene masterfully constructed for maximum effect. The red splash of the room highlighted his drab garments. With brilliant showmanship, Xiang looked up and began to speak in Mandarin, the only language he claimed to know well. The translation required only brief work.

He opened with, “Good day, ladies, gentlemen, and friends. Sorry to have kept you waiting.” Camera’s flashed; Xiang smiled. It was a great photo shoot. He continued, “A world awakened after COVID-19 has touched every human being on Earth. Never has such a thing brought an entire species together as this virus has done. As a world we have evolved together. I would like to thank the public press for their efforts in helping to make a change for the better. Your hard

work has made the world a better place. Ready to tackle issues that promote humanity...”

The clapping started slowly as the translator caught up. It started in the back of the room, then progressed into a roll of thunderous applause as Xiang injected, “...I stand here celebrating all of you.”

The applause was at full boil now, with people standing.

Not everyone was standing and for that matter, not everyone was clapping. These people were in the clear minority, singled out by some Western news outlets as the “whacko squad.”

Xiang put his hands out, palms down, pulsating his palms in a pumping action to calm the applause down as he smiled. When the crowd was silent, he moved into a statement that would turn America and, effectively, the world, upside down.

“Your work was critical and China appreciates your role, as does the world.” Again, the beginnings of applause as Xiang motioned now was not the time for applause. As quickly as the clapping started, it stopped. “The 2020 US Presidential elections were another area where your work, along with China, changed the world for the better by eliminating Reginald Powell from winning a destructive second term...”

It was about here faces started to change in the enormous press pool. Once again, the translator worked to keep up, “...President Crowder, his vice-president, Senator Chase Slummer, are our partners. Speaker Nan Petard, who has been fantastic in organizing her California politburo...”

Causing the American National News reporter to say into his microphone feed, “Did he just say the California politburo?”

Xiang didn’t miss a beat, “...certain friendly state Secretaries, the Democratic Party, and all its distinguished members, many leaders of the US military, the FBI, and many others, allowed us to change that election so evil would lose and virtue would win. You ensured that the majority of uninformed Americans received enlightening in this new world era. The time is now, America. Rise and embrace the enlightened policies of your new leaders, policies for the collective good of America. Thank you and good evening.”

And just like that, Xiang turned and walked away, leaving behind a room full of silenced and stunned press. Then everything went dark. The confiscation of satellite phones was underway. One reporter from the American National News network said aloud into his sat phone, “Rut-row. This is not good...” And he went dark, too.

At 4:13am EST, Xiang finished his speech. President Crowder was about to rise. Known as the “crabby ignorant bastard” or CIB by Secret Service insiders, the feeling must have been like the D-Day invasion, when no one wanted to wake up Hitler to let him know. At 5am EST, President Gerard Crowder learned of the press conference, received his Presidential Daily Brief (PDB), and asked for his breakfast. Joining the president this morning was June Paynes, his Director of National Intelligence (DNI). His first question, “Hungry? I know you didn’t come here just for breakfast. Must be good; this is early. Zhukov? Guy is a bastard.” Crowder knew her appearance, this early, was a bad omen.

“We believe he is alive, Mr. President, shot but uninjured. Assets on the ground believe it was a staged event to justify the war. That is in the brief, not why I am here, sir, although some coffee would be wonderful,” Paynes spoke plainly.

“What then?” the President quipped. No matter the party affiliations, most of his own realized he was a moron. But he was their dope. Paynes, a former purveyor of erotic books at her book café in Virginia Beach, didn’t have a tough time understanding Gerard’s rather weird touchy-feely mannerisms. He’d make a good character in one of those erotic books, which wasn’t what bothered her. His complete lack of understanding while believing he was an expert in all things is what grated her. She thought him a classic Dunning-Kruger example relegated to the lesser end of that scale. *Deep breath* she thought internally without taking the deep breath.

“We have information that could not make the PDB this morning. It’s Xiang...” she started.

“Xiang, that son of a bitch, what is he up to now? If he invaded Taiwan, you people would have pig piled on my bed to wake me up...” and he smiled at the thought of Paynes doing that as he ate his omelet.

Guy’s got a fucking problem, Paynes thought and then checked herself. “Xiang held that press conference...”

“What press conference?” the president asked.

Good grief, the one I briefed you on, she thought. “The press conference in Beijing where nearly all the world’s press showed up. Two major issues, Mr. President. First, he

implicated your involvement, along with the entire Democratic Party and China in fixing the 2020 election with China and...”

“FUCK THEM!! Jesus, titty, fucking Christ, June, why don’t you give me some real info, like that fucking Doochy <*right leaning news correspondent*> fell down and broke his head open on a Chinese brick...”

“Mr. President, please, let me finish. And no, Mr. Doochy did not fall. Although now that you mention that you bring me to part two. We don’t know exactly where that Press Corp is now. China had a planned blackout. Their entire electrical grid shut down.” Paynes finished as the president learned that FBI Director Roger Buntin was on the line. Buntin was looking for both the president, the DNI Director, and the Homeland Security Director. He found two out of the three.

“Mr. President, Director Buntin, good morning, sir,” and didn’t wait for the return salutation adding right away. “We are inundated with requests for protection from various members of Congress, all Democratic caucus members, due to credible and very real death threats. We may have lost one already...” The time was 5:08a EST. President Crowder’s morning would only get worse and now the international calls were coming in.

At thirteen minutes past 9a GMT (4:13a EST), Prime Minister Otis Johnstone finished watching the press conference. He was tired, having enjoyed a blue pill night before with his young wife. Just seconds after things went black on the screen, he was already dealing with members of his own party who thought Liberals and their sub-organization, the Liberal Democrats, were the same thing as American

Democrats. Johnstone was also about to have a bad day. His was the first call to the U.S. President.

At 10:14a CET (4:14a EST), German Chancellor Dorf Scholtzinger had his own problems with Earnst Merzter of the conservative right, asking him to step down. Merzter wondered aloud how deep left leaning German officials were in bed with American Democrats. Dorf began his interview with, “German Democrats exist right and left. In America, they are strictly left. We are NOT America.” Germany immediately pulled away from the United States. The President would get that news at 5:20a EST.

The situation was no different in every western Democracy. Most of America’s allies, save the United Kingdom, saw this as an opportunity to distance themselves from America for the first time since World War II. Western Democracy was dividing.

At 12:14p MSK (4:14a EST), President Zhukov was laughing from his hospital bed to the point where his assigned, and extremely well-endowed and gorgeous nurse warned him that his bandages would come undone. As fast he started laughing, he stopped, asked for a phone and called General Zerasimov. “Start shelling as close to the Polish border as you can without hitting a Pole.” *Worthless culture*, Zhukov thought, *worthless fucking Poles*. He wouldn’t be calling the United States President.

Zhukov then waved to Sofia, his nurse, to come to his side. Sofia smiled knowing full well he would buy another top after he forcefully ripped hers off. Yakov Zhukov was about to have a particularly good day and he didn’t need a blue pill. He’d

finish with Sofia before the BBC reported on his shelling order—then he would wait.

As the world looked internally in on itself, America at 4:13a EST was primarily asleep, short of the a few who were up at this hour. The live broadcast from Beijing was destined for the morning news “A” slot.

Left leaning outlets led with story titles such as, “News Crews from Multiple Organizations Missing in Beijing. Power is Out. Xiang Off His Rocker?”

The right leaning outlets, along with a growing band of podcast news outlets ran with “Democrats and Chinese Threw the 2020 Election, Says Xiang.”

The clips of Xiang were on every channel and quite clear. Off his rocker or not, the CCP was claiming that it had actively worked with the American press, the Democratic Party, state election officials of both parties, the military, and several federal agencies to throw the election to Gerard Crowder.

Was Xiang’s assertion true? Like most masterful lies, the lie was a container for a few of grains of truth in a sea of complete bullshit. But the classic tactic worked like a charm. Nationally, President Crowder, along with nearly all the “new” Democratic Party members, were horn locked with the “conspiratorial Right,” comprised mainly of Republicans. The lie only required plausibility.

Xiang had just offered some matches without directly placing his fingerprints on the matchbox. It was a gamble of the first order, but after decades of preparation, the final two

elements of the Chinese plan—eliminate them first, then subjugate them later—had begun. Most thought the Chinese military would attack America conventionally or by nuclear means.

Those thinkers underestimated the ingenuity of the culture.

The elimination would come from inside; Americans would eliminate each other. The Chinese military would be the mop-up operation for the silly, suicidal lazy dumb Americans and the carnage would begin on one of the most widely watched morning shows in America.

The Breakfast Show wasn't really known for breaking news stories. Today promised to be such a day. A planned studio appearance by Speaker Nan Petard regarding her new push to change voting rules was on the "A" roll spot. Always ready to please Democrats, the Speaker's arrival in their New York studio was a special treat. The folks at network thought it was an incredibly good idea—two weeks ago when they booked the time slot with her. The paradox was Xiang's announcement, which had come less than an hour before Petard's appearance. This made for a rather interesting interview. Make-up complete in the green room; the Speaker made her way to the new white leather couch where a smiling Samantha Gutrich waited. The small stage crew readied the set. Petard, for an elderly woman, looked put together. She wore a fuchsia Akris dress. Her style, regardless of one's political persuasion, was impeccable. She seemed either unphased or unaware of Xiang's assertions.

Samantha started her series of questions with, "Good morning, Madam Speaker, good morning." The Speaker

returned the gesture with her own “good morning.” “Well, it’s certainly an interesting morning, Speaker,” Samantha continued. “How do you respond to President Xiang’s accusation that you, President Crowder, and several prominent Democrats worked with China to influence the 2020 election in favor of Gerard Crowder?”

The look on Petard’s face was a combination of horror and anger. Those were not the beach ball questions that normally happened at the Breakfast Show. “I don’t know why you feel the need to perpetuate something that is clearly not true.”

“So, that is your answer? It’s not true?” Samantha quickly countered. She then noted that maybe the Speaker had not seen the actual statement and apologized for not playing the clip. “Roll the tape...”

“The 2020 US Presidential elections were another area where your work, along with China, changed the world for the better by eliminating Reginald Powell from winning a destructive second term. President Crowder, his vice-president, Senator Chase Slummer, are our partners. Speaker Nan Petard, who has been fantastic in organizing her California politburo, certain friendly state Secretaries, the Democratic Party, and all its distinguished members, many leaders of the US military, the FBI, and many others, allowed us to change that election so evil would lose and virtue would win.”

The clip ended and Samantha quipped, “Are California Democrats a politburo?” It was obvious to everyone, even Gutrich, that Petard had not seen the broadcast. For one of the first times in her life, panic showed in her eyes.

Two things went through the Speaker’s mind at that very moment. The first was, *What the hell is going on?* The second was a 230-grain jacketed hollow point 45 ACP that entered her skull, just below her left eye. Brain matter sprayed her last thoughts out and onto the studio’s windows.

Millions of viewers worldwide viewed this assassination on live television and heard the cameraman, who was evidently not indifferent to the Xiang broadcast, yell, “Fuck you, you Communist cunt!” The network went to a screen showing their station logo. Someone finally realized this transmission had to end. The time was 5:08a EST. It was February 25, 2022, Zero Day. The American Calamity had just begun.

FEBRUARY 2053 Andover, Maine

“Sweetheart, you need to give this young man a break,” the missus said as she entered the grand room. She was holding a silver tray of hot tea. Ann caught Stephen looking to see if she had made fresh blueberry scones. She gave him that smile that she had. The grand room of the old house was certainly Stephen’s favorite spot. It had a huge granite fireplace, allowing for five-foot logs and all the trappings of an old Gothic hunting lodge. It was a perfect winter spot, especially with the fireplace roaring.

“Snow’s picking up, love,” Stephen answered as he got up to put a few more large logs on the fire. Ann, after years of being by his side, knew Stephen better than he knew himself. A hangry Stephen is a crabby Stephen. She continued to set up the tea set for Stephen and his guest.

“Just to get this straight, sir, you actually saw this broadcast?” Lieutenant Tooley asked incredulously. Tooley was a rather young man, late twenties, skinny, fit like all the kids now and eager, Stephen assessed. He was mission oriented, honest, resolute, and smart, according to Adcock. Stephen tried to get his own handle on this Lieutenant Tooley. *Dark olive skin, brown eyes, and black hair...probably Latino descent. He most likely doesn’t even know,* Stephen assessed internally. Then again, his surname certainly provided no clues. *No one knows their families back story anymore, just that they survived.*

What Stephen knew, according to Otis, was that Tooley was a clever young man, ready for promotion to captain. He was sitting in his lodge wearing the new olive drab “Ike” jacket with pinkish pants. It was woodsy in a way, yet a handsome look. General George Patton would be proud. Stephen thought he said he hailed from the remnants of California. Awful things happened on the west coast. *Maybe later I will press him like the way he’ll be pressing the shit out of me,* Stephen thought to himself. *He probably still thinks he was only sent here to fulfill a history book. Well,* Stephen thought, *at least that was partially true. There was a purpose to the history. Little of this is going to be pleasant.*

Stephen decided now to answer his question as Ann buzzed around the room. “Ann and I both did. We watched it in the

living room of our home in Connecticut. Funny thing was, we both hated that station and just so happened to have it on that morning. I blame Ann for stumbling onto that station,” Stephen chuckled. Ann smiled, saying right back, “He blames me when the power goes out, too, Lieutenant Tooley, so take it with a grain of salt.” Each chuckled now at Ann’s editorial.

Stephen continued, “Keep in mind, Lieutenant, that television was part of everyday life back then. Speaking of power, it was abundant, albeit expensive. Our infrastructure of 2022 allowed for thousands of channels, some satellite, some cable, some on fiber optic delivery systems. Cell phones, everyone had one, like mobile minicomputers.” Stephen paused at Tooley’s look of doubt. “I can understand why you might disbelieve me. Let me make this easier for you. We were two of tens of millions that saw that event. I’m sure some are still alive today.” Stephen thought, *How far we have fallen in just thirty years*. Looking outside, he saw it was dark and the wind was howling, blowing snow past the window at a fervent rate. Stephen loved the winters; they were a quiet time.

“General Otis mentioned that to me, too. He said he didn’t see that broadcast but he did inform me during our interview that communication and power were common items,” the LT offered.

Stephen thought before he replied to Tooley. *How little this new generation understands the world were before 2023, when it really went upside down. Completely foreign to them. I’m going to bet that LT Tooley was born around 2022 or maybe 2023? Both awful years too*, Stephen continued to assess Tooley in thought.

Stephen decided to add a little levity to the discussion. “General Otis is a good man. I had a hell of a good time in his zone. The Appalachian Bandit, good God I had fun working combat ops with him. I just called him the Geriatric Bandit last time we talked. Do NOT print that!”

“No, sir!” LT Tooley answered right away, although he was smiling. Tooley thought back to his interview with the Appalachian Bandit, who was dying of cancer, and remembered what he said about the General: “If that fucker tells you something is gonna happen and it hasn’t happened yet, take it to the damn bank; it’s probably gonna happen. Guy has a gift from God.” *I wonder*, Tooley thought.

Over dinner, Stephen spoke about the political situation in 2021 and 2022. The two terms Stephen kept using were “elite class” and “muddles.” Tooley was conflicted. General Adcock described General Moore as rather wealthy before 2023. He also said that he was an American patriot prior to joining the Continental Army in 2023. It was time to press a bit, just a bit. He decided to ask about the money first. Tooley just didn’t know enough about what happened thirty years ago to ask questions about loyalty placements. “General, back in 2021, were you a “muddle” as you described it or the elite class? I heard you were rich before the war.” Tooley remembered that “muddles” were, according to General Moore, those whose riches were as robust as a mud puddle. They evaporated at the first negative financial event.

Fair question, Stephen thought before answering. “I was a public servant who made a shit ton of money in investments of all kinds: stocks, oil, businesses, and land. That said, I was a

‘muddle’ in spirit through and through. More accurately, I was an American. I believed that America was exceptional.”

“Yes, sir.” Tooley seemed uncomfortable with his response. Stephen noticed his lack of understanding.

“The events changed us all. Don’t get ahead of things. This like a Chapter 1?”

“No, General sir, it’s part of a rather diverse collection of perspectives regarding the American calamity. I’m tasked with writing a large chapter of chronological events. Yours just happens to be one of the few accounts of the Megalopolis East situation in, hold on a minute...”

“New England son, New England, I was in primarily the North part of those actions. New Hampshire of old, Vermont, Maine, where we are now, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island or what’s left of the last two. It probably shows as *the Meg* on your maps.” He reminded Tooley, who was pensively trying to locate these former states. “Did you hear me?” *Good grief, it wasn’t that long ago. His maps look current. Then again, he probably has no use for the “old” pre-conflict maps anyway.*

“Oh, yes, sir, I am just trying to get my bearings,” he replied. “I apologize for not being better geographically prepared, sir...”

Better get your shit together with map reading kiddo, Stephen internalized.

Ann, who was always available to snap Stephen back into place, said, “General, you are eighty-two; the lieutenant here was just born before these events. Please be pleasant.” Then turning to Tooley, “Don’t mind him, Lieutenant, enjoy your tea and have a scone.”

Tooley smiled at Ann and nodded his thanks as he began to enjoy a scone and some East Indian tea. *She so reminds me of mom*, Tooley continued to think.

Stephen knew he made people uncomfortable but didn’t really care. Age made him more inclined to get it done with fleet foot because, well, at eighty-two, foot was not as fleet as it once was. Being blunt was just another way to get things done. Even the kids today, and the lieutenant was a kid, were much different than before 2023.

They were very respectful and bluntly honest. How things have changed. How the American English vernacular has changed, going back in time a bit, Stephen thought, *before even my time. They sounded more like old John Wayne westerns.*

Today most kids desire classical music. Stephen tried desperately to discover ZZ Top albums or maybe some ELO. The kids hated it, saying, “General, not to be disrespectful, sir, but that is just noise.” Thinking about the past, Stephen smiled at Ann. He fell asleep in front of the warm fire...

“...can you continue Sir?” Tooley asked, waking him. Stephen saw him staring at the woolly mammoth ivory grips on his 1911 custom pistol. Grip panels that are impossible to get today. The pistol was an old Nighthawk Firehawk custom built in old Arkansas.

“You have crumbs on your chin, Lieutenant.”

Ann gave Stephen that look as she handed Tooley a cloth napkin. Ann knew that some of Stephen’s gruffness was just an act, he spent his entire life in defense of people, so when he acted poorly, it only took a little disapproval to put him back on track. *Men can be so silly sometimes*, she thought.

“Yes, I can continue. Now is when things start to get interesting but it’s getting late. We shall rise at zero-seven hundred hours, have breakfast, and continue this interview tomorrow. It’s a dark subject. Best we talk with some sunshine. Have a good evening, Lieutenant. Ann has prepared a chamber for you.”

“Good night, sir,” LT Tooley responded. Just a few minutes later, he found a wonderfully comfortable bed waiting for him. A small fire was burning in the firebox. Extinguishing the oil lamp, Tooley was asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. *What a day*, were his last thoughts.

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CHAPTER 11: CAMPING

MARCH 2053 Andover, Maine

Tooley was on overload. “I don’t even know where to begin.”

“Just getting started, Edward.” Stephen replied. The sun was starting to go down. He wondered how John was doing. Memories of the day Melissa died washed over him like it was yesterday. *Best he wasn’t here for that*, Stephen confirmed to himself.

“How did you get that international information from Air Force One?” Tooley asked incredulously.

“I had the fortune of capturing a person who was in that conference room. We had a chat about things. I will leave it at that for now,” Stephen answered with a wry smile.

Tooley didn’t doubt him. He was learning that if he said it, he knew. Then he thought, *What about that CIA thing? General Adcock never mentioned that! General Moore is a treasure trove of info. Almost scary.*

Stephen emphasized to Tooley that internationally, things were shaping into well-defined national camps. These events happened naturally, humans doing what they have done since the beginning of time, fence off outsiders.

Russia worried about Russia, and they wanted to ensure no one else bothered them. China had a goal, retake Taiwan. The pawns—Ukraine, Belarus, North Korea, and a few other smaller nations were victims of a larger chess move. Pawns, bishops, and knights required sacrificing sometimes to get to checkmate. Machiavelli would be proud.

Western alliance's fell apart, NATO was toast. The United States was doing exactly what the president instructed, "circling the wagons." Other countries did the same. Germany did what was best for Germany, France for France, etc. etc. Given the lack of communication, power, and feelings of despair, the reactions were logical. The glue that kept the world together, communication in all forms, had nearly vanished.

Stephen dove into a deeper description for Tooley's consumption. *Talking about EMP to Tooley's generation was the equivalent of describing an alien craft from other worlds. He needs to understand this*, Stephen thought.

EMP had a causal effect that many did not fully appreciate. The electrical grids in eighty-five percent of the world were a memory. Places in Africa, once considered the middle of nowhere, had access to more electrical power than people living in NYC. Brazil didn't notice much of a change. The tables, in this regard, had turned.

Many experts predicted that cars would just fry due to EMP. Some noted a running car was death; others stated the complete opposite. Turns out that fifteen percent of the modern cars, whether turned on or off, permanently died. Their computer modules burnt. Electrical vehicles (EVs) that were charging fried just like television sets. The one major

difference was that the televisions didn't light on fire. The EVs did, courtesy of thermal runaway. Oddly enough, if they weren't plugged in when the blasts hit, they had an impressive survival rate. Although, obtaining electricity was nearly as impossible as obtaining petrol, so it became moot point.

The real hit was that everything in production just stopped. Everything worldwide just stopped. The financial system stopped. The Fed's new digi-dollar, which was becoming wildly popular and which many had converted to, was dead. Their digi-dollars, Bitcoins, and other electronic deposits vanished. Billions of dollars evaporated from the money supply system, all disintegrated in an electromagnetic pulse. Even the electronic currencies that survived in a "wallet" were worthless without the infrastructure to back them up and the internet was gone. Physical mylar nanotech printed digi-dollars, while somewhat rare, were the last remnant of the new gold standard initiated by Crowder. This made the old fiat Federal Reserve notes, the greenbacks, suddenly come back in style. Physical gold and silver became monetary king again.

Transportation of goods stopped. Food, fuel, and medicines were all at a standstill. No amount of money could make critical medicines appear for the public in need.

The supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) units that were needed to regulate water, sewer, natural gas pipelines, and a host of other applications were all dead.

There were no spares, no chance of obtaining new microchip boards, and no ability to coordinate efforts. Given the political condition of the United States, most saw misery for the next several decades.

“Peace is predominant now in 2053. Stable, too, for the most part. The Agreement of 2025 ended the outright hostilities,” Stephen finished, desiring to end on a positive note. *The EMP episode was a depressing subject.*

“Fascinating. We have micro power districts now, so power is a local affair,” Tooley said.

“It isn’t siloed. They connect but aren’t dependent on one another. They’re a co-opt of sorts, different from the old system. Nothing’s perfect but it’s a solid system.”

“Got it. Pandemonium must have been crazy...I mean Mrs. Clements’s death, for instance,” Tooley responded.

“An outlaw gang got into a shootout with the New Hampshire State Police. It was a state police bullet that killed Melissa. It was a total accident, and we were in a bad location. Poor Melissa, I still miss her to this day. She was a doll, an absolute doll,” Stephen said, his eyes watering up. “But that had nothing to do with the mood of the day, Edward. Initially, at least for the first three days, people thought it was fun. Like camping. No general pandemonium.”

“Camping?”

“Yes. Most were clueless about EMP, its effects, or what would come. So, the first few days were like roughing it. Fun to some,” Stephen noted.

2 NOV 2022 8:00a EST South Farmington, Connecticut

Captain Tony Moreno had spent the night at the Moore home. Ann made sure Tony had everything he needed for as long as he wanted to stay. There were fresh sheets, towels, and food for the week. After that it was up to Tony. His days off were Wednesday and Thursday. It was supposed to hit 65 degrees that day, making it an enjoyable day to relax on the back deck. As he opened his eyes, something struck him. It was quiet. It was really quiet.

The room was chilly. The heat register was blank. Something felt odd. *Good Christmas*, he thought, *what the fuck happened to my phone?* Whatever happened it was obvious that he would need a new one. The charging cable was fused to the phone. *Weird*, Tony noted, *power off?* He touched the light switch: nothing. *The power is definitely off*, he said to himself, feeling like an idiot. About then he smelled what seemed like the smell of an electrical fire.

He checked the house. He found that the electrical fuse box in the basement was smokey but not on fire. The lightning arrestors were damaged. The main breakers were finished. The smoke smelled more like melted plastic. *What a fucking mess*, Tony thought, *here one fucking night and I broke the place.*

Tony spent what was supposed to be a relaxing morning wondering what the hell had happened. He checked his Motorola police radio and found it non-operational. Strange arching burn marks were in the charging cradle. Tony began to realize what may have happened.

He ran to the garage where he had parked his police cruiser in the bay that formerly held Stephen's Rolls-Royce. The garage door opener was dead. He felt foolish for even hitting the button. When he manually opened the door, he saw neighbors talking. *No time for that*, he thought as he opened the cruiser door. *Will it work?*

He pushed the start button on the 2021 Ford Police Interceptor. The utility vehicle sprung to life. The radio crackled like some serious interference was going on. "Car One to any unit that can hear this transmission," Tony broadcast.

Nothing. He tried again. Nothing.

What the fuck? he thought. *It must be some kind of attack.* He instinctively looked at his Apple Watch, which he forgot to put on the charger last night. *It works*, he thought in amazement and scolded himself for not thinking to check it earlier. There was no cellular service though. He shut down his cruiser, secured the garage door, and pretended not to notice the neighbors.

Tony decided to use the hot water and pressure remaining in the boilers for a nice shower, get on his uniform, and head to work. It'd be his last hot shower.

What greeted him after leaving the Moore home was a series of house fires, a non-operational communications system, and a mayor who wanted to know if Stephen Moore had already left.

MARCH 2053 Andover, Maine

“Captain Moreno knew it was an attack?” Tooley responded.

“Well, Tony was a smart bastard. He certainly knew about EMP, and we had had several talks concerning EMP attacks and our vulnerability as a nation. There was nothing we could do about it at our level. We just wanted to understand the effects,” Stephen said.

Stephen described the first three days. “Our little crew was at the New Hampshire Welcome Center when the EMPs hit. It was in the wee hours of November 2, 2022. We were anxious to get to Maine. If not for poor Melissa’s death, everything might have been nearly perfect for us. We were out of *the Meg*, which was fortunate because all roadblocks were closed post-attack. Pass or no pass, you weren’t allowed through. My only connection to *the Meg* was Tony and we didn’t make radio contact until just before Thanksgiving.”

“Why so late?” Tooley questioned.

“The ionosphere was so charged that all the frequencies I wanted to use were shot until things settled down. We tried the ninth of November. Forget it, the line was awash in noise...just noise. The sixteenth was better but Tony, I found out later, was up to his eyeballs in problems. We caught up on the twenty-third.”

Tooley was having a challenging time understanding what the general meant by ‘problems’ in a world he had only experienced in textbooks or old magazines. People were self-reliant today. If you needed food, you grew it. If you needed

stuff, you either made it or bartered for it. Not knowing how to respond completely, Tooley appeared puzzled.

“Edward, it’s almost hard for people to imagine today what life was like inside *the* Meg. It was a zone predominantly made up of urban and suburban cities. Mostly everything needed to survive, food, water, clothes, building supplies, had to be either trucked, flown, or piped in. There was a fragile network of providers on the outside and consumers on the inside of these built-up areas. Before the EMPs, this was working, even with the political nonsense. We were on a kind of societal life-support. Everyone was waiting until November’s elections to hopefully take us out of the malaise. EMP happened instead. All distribution stopped. No electricity was fun for a day or two. Then people began saying, ‘When is it coming back on?’” Stephen said.

He understood that for Tooley to fully understand the gravity of these first three days, he needed to understand the human psyche too. A psyche completely formed in the relative peace and tranquility of a system that was dying. Stephen could see that Tooley was still trying to grasp what he was trying to describe. Stephen pressed on.

“People alive in *the* Meg did not understand what it meant to have no food, Edward. You purchased food, you didn’t grow it. They experienced shortages of food stuff, like a shipment of corned beef not arriving for St. Patrick’s Day. That is one thing to experience; it was an inconvenience. Or, maybe, my favorite cookies didn’t arrive. But when grocery stores had no food, that was foreign. That was not an inconvenience; it was a roadmap to starvation. After five days, grocery stores were empty. People flipped the fuck out. In the matter of a day or so,

their former world ceased to exist and they had no idea what to do next. Tony saw that firsthand.”

Stephen estimated during his director period that the average family in South Farmington had about five days of food on average. A few had more; some had less. Five days was the average and that included everything, the can of lima beans in the back of the cabinet, or maybe the expired jar of baked beans.

With the lack of electricity, freezers died. The great melting began. Day one and two saw neighborhood barbecues that exceeded the nicest Memorial Day picnics. Hamburgers, steaks, and chicken were enjoyed in small block parties. Any perishable refrigerated foods were also included in these barbecues.

Speculation in the first couple days became profoundly serious conversations on day three. Nearly everyone in *the* Meg didn't want to leave and go to the rural red areas. The press painted places like New Hampshire, Maine, and even Vermont as dangerous and full of outlaws. Running to the cabin the family owned for years in New Hampshire was out of the question in their minds. Even if they wanted to, the borders were closed. The military assumed total control. By day two, President Crowder from Air Force One had declared full martial law.

Oil ran out. Those with full oil tanks thought they were fine. Then they realized there was no power to keep them going anyway. Electric generators used to power the heating systems pumps and blowers ran out of fuel long before the heating oil tanks went empty. Some might have had heat until Christmas.

Then heating would consist of burning furniture to stay warm. Starvation was now compounded by freezing to death.

Water and sanitation became an issue. Public water was off. Supply control systems had burned out with no way to replace them. Water employees manned the pumps and reservoirs until they abandoned their jobs to be with their families. Private wells only worked at those homes where generators still had gas. Septic systems were fine until the next time they needed pumping out. Gravity public sewers were good until the first blockage, then sewage started filling basements in low lying areas. Only gravity systems worked past day five. Sewer pump stations that serviced non-gravity lines failed day one. Then the sewer plants went down, dumping raw sewage into the rivers.

Almost universally, day five resulted in a controlled panic. The question finally asked was, “Where is the government?”

One cannot fully appreciate Maslow’s basic hierarchy of needs until a full analysis of November 2–6, 2022, becomes part of a new college curriculum. Conversations about the fulfillment of base level physiological needs dominated all discussions. Questions now asked were: “Who has food?” “Who has guns?” “Who has medical training?” “Anyone with trade skills?” “Gardeners?” There were plenty of accountants, lawyers, teachers, professors, and other professionals, but few with a skill set that met these new needs. The carpenter was suddenly appreciated as were the plumber and electrician. The old lady who grew a vegetable garden became popular in her neighborhood, having conversations about a springtime garden set up. Healthy neighborhoods began to bond, forming into

micro levels within *the* Meg. Although it was too late for that, winter was coming. Everyone would starve first.

The US government had no plan, except the self-preservation of high-ranking officials, who shuttled off to several safe havens full of supplies. The federal system chugged along.

Outside the small subset of high value government types, the masses were, once again, split into two categories. The extremely rich simply shuffled off to their hideaways. Most had purchased large ranches years before. The “muddles” just had to figure out a way on their own because Uncle Sam wasn’t coming to the rescue. American people be damned.

“That’s about how Tony described it to me when we talked later,” Stephen said with a sigh.

“Incredible. What happened after that? You said that most people had about five days of food...” Tooley inquired.

“It wasn’t only about food. Keep in mind, too, Edward, that you had pregnant women and those who had just given birth. There were people who needed medications to stay alive. There were people who needed specialized medical care, like dialysis. And there were those with a slew of other issues that didn’t necessarily crop up in the first few days. Nursing homes were abandoned. Most of society was in denial during the ‘camping phase’ of things.”

“What if they needed help?”

“What help? The police had no phones. Communications were gone. Even if you could retrieve services, where would you go? The field hospital in South Farmington, for example, immediately rationed supplies for official use only. The military area was inaccessible to residents. The sick were dying at their gates. The translation: ‘tough shit.’ By day three, ambulances were parked. Fire apparatus used for a solid two days fighting fires from the EMP events were low on fuel and couldn’t be resupplied with water. The Feds commandeered any stored fuel reserves held by the town. Replacement parts for broken engines were not attainable. By the close of day six, maybe seven, most public safety services were done,” Stephen said solemnly.

“People were that dependent?” Tooley inquired. It seemed incredible to Tooley; this pampered lifestyle the general talked about.

“Today, a sick infant dies, for the most part. It’s sad, it’s awful, but prenatal care is a memory...”

“What’s prenatal care?”

“You are making my point, young Edward. Type One diabetes doesn’t exist today. They die. Type Two diabetes is rare because most people are very fit today. Obesity rare. Kidney dialysis...you most likely die. Cancer, unless it’s one of the drugs we can still get or a treatment we can do, is a death sentence,” Stephen said. “Today, we have some of the basics down. Surgeries are more common now. Open heart, for instance, is being done in Boston and a few other places. Boston General Hospital just started a prenatal care program. So, we slowly but surely are getting back what we lost.”

“Wow. It’s difficult for me to imagine what I never experienced. I have heard stories of warehouses full of food, all for sale, and medical help on demand and a working educational system...”

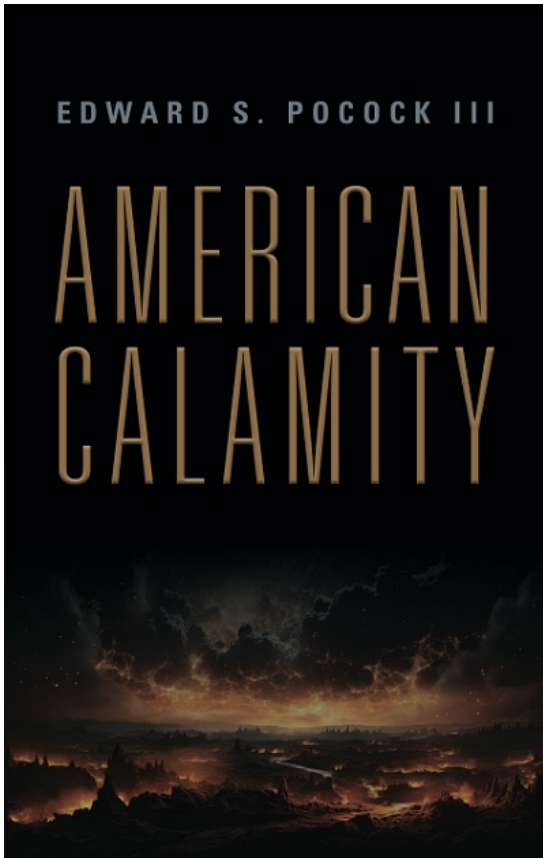
“Let’s not get crazy about the working educational department. We had serious struggles with that area when things kicked off. But...even there, education went from putting kids on a bus and sending them to school to homeschooling. It’s still that today. As to universities, we have Harvard back up. It’s different than before 2022, but still our best hope for continuing higher education.”

“That’s funny General. You’ve been reserved with your political viewpoints.”

Stephen wondered if he was busting his balls, then determined he probably wasn’t. “I’m an equal opportunity hater of politicians in general, Edward. They got us into this mess because all they wanted was power and money. People be damned. The schools were shit. Math, writing, and reading are the fundamentals.” Stephen could see Edward’s eyes gloss over with that “No shit” look. “Many school systems were fucking that up. Hard. I can assure you that isn’t the case today, Edward. I’ll leave it at that.”

“Fascinating,” Tooley observed, “So, for people settled down at a fixed location, I can see how those three days seemed like camping. I get that. I never heard it described that way before. But...your group. You were mobile. Mrs. Clements was dead. What was that experience like?”

“We just wanted to get to the house. Certainly, wasn’t fucking camping for us. John was devastated. He, like all of us, couldn’t believe Melissa was dead. But we had to get the fuck out of there. Even John realized that staying at that Welcome Center was only going to get worse. The troopers were dead, a few bikers were dead. The cavalry wasn’t coming. The New Hampshire troopers were experiencing everything Tony was experiencing in South Farmington. Same shit, different place. As to the remaining gangsters, they saw that we had a casualty and, more importantly, that we were armed. For the moment, they chose to leave us alone. They removed roadblocks to gain access to the highway. We saw no sense in bothering them; we just wanted them to move along. We got John’s truck running again by disconnecting and reconnecting the battery. He carefully loaded Melissa in the passenger seat, tears in his eyes and covered her in a blanket. We were all crying. It was just awful. We loaded up and it was John that said, “Homeward bound Stephen...let’s take Melissa homeward bound.” ”



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