

TRUMPERY RESISTANCE

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CHAPTER ONE

Trumpery is defined as something that is attractive but has little value or use. It is further defined as practices or beliefs of superficial appeal but provides little or no real worth. Trumpery now establishes the cause and effect of what was once a great nation.

Trumpery surrounded me in every action on every street from every mouth of every day. Trumpery filled the air from booth to mouth as flowery words spilled to describe the shit each vendor sold. Every trader is more skilled than the last at hawking rubbish as something that without, their consumer could not exist. Tell them the same lie three times, and they will buy anything you shovel at them. Trumpery to sell trumpery.

Trumpery makes even the keenest of minds blind to its divisiveness and trickery. That single statement, having multitudes of application to the remade nation, paves the way of my path to

recovery from their conditioning. The illusions fell away into the nothingness of our leader's empty promises and bloated self-image. My thoughts and ideas were becoming my own again, but survival required I acquiesced to the strike laws and moral code of the New Republic.

One hint of defiance, one utterance of disagreement, one look of doubt and even your own mother might turn you over to the Enforcers for justice. The citizens would do anything to gain themselves favor and currency. In this year twenty-one sixty-nine, one hundred fifty years into the rule of our Lord Chancellor Dampnut, trumpery has become doctrine.

MacKenzie Dillon, the name I was given when indoctrinated into the service of the Protectorate, is the only name I remember. I have served the religious zealots since first becoming an enforcer of the law. These laws are the Edicts of the New Republic. I have lived and served the Protectorate for decades thanks to the miracles of science, medicine and the spoils of Space Force.

Everything is privatized, owned by the few, with little left for the masses except the darker trades. Black markets, sex workers, drugs, those exist but are run by conglomerates who are little more than thugs and gangs. Those criminals reported back to the actual criminals, the wealthy members of the Elite Caste. Holo-images of their wares displayed along the back alleys, while the main streets were patrolled by the likes of my team of Enforcers and me.

The Enforcers are the third level of the caste system, just above the General Population and Merchant Castes. Enforcers work as the military and policing body in the perpetual state of martial law. This is the day my journey to thinking for myself again started.

I stopped at a booth selling refurbished and upgraded old tech. Personal computer tablets and what used to be handheld communication devices littered the old man's counter. Junk for the most part; nobody used these devices in the upper castes. Even the general population had access to better technology, though they had no genuine need for such luxuries. There were a few items of note, items of which I was not familiar with at the time, but a scuffle nearby pulled my attention away. I noticed the vendor remove some items as I departed.

A fight had broken out at a food vendor. Though there was plenty of government provided nutritional supplements and water, enterprising grunts found a market for roasted rat and in this case what was likely a small dog. Not many options existed for fresh meat from a domestic supply after the 'Unifying Event'. The devastation outside the safety of our Eastern wall meant poison and disease to wild animals and domesticated herds. Any meat imported was well out of reach to the lower castes unless they spent an un-augmented lifetime's worth of credits on a single steak. Even then there was no telling what the meat truly was.

The disaster left the entire globe in a mess. The European Union nearly collapsed. Civil wars over resources and land spread through countries in the Northern hemisphere. Global trade came to a near halt. And yet the ninety-nine percent of the survivors from the Unifying Event in the then United States still looked up to the powers that kept them in their place. It is easier to look up to the rich and powerful as giants rather than look at them and see they stand on your back.

These giants of industry and wealth are little people who spend their lives standing on the backs of the laborers who build their empires. They have a knack for making themselves richer, always wanting more while caring less and less.

I was once practiced at separating and muting the sounds of the 'Grunt' levels from my thoughts. The general population, or Grunts, eked out a living as best they could, rarely leaving the first few stories of any city center. These ground levels rang with a melancholy chorus where shouting and chattering of vendors hawked their wares, blending with moans of the downtrodden and forgotten. Overhead the 'safety' drones hummed, hovered, and moved along, scanning the filth-ridden streets for signs of dissent. I boarded my shuttle and flew on to another city.

As I exited my transport, the stench of oppression filled my nose. The barrage of rotting food and garbage along urine-soaked streets tested my gag reflex to its limit. Covering my mouth with a scarf, I proceeded toward the first of many hovels I would visit, enforcing the Edicts of the New Republic and the religious Protectorate.

A haggard woman, leathery face and sunken eyes belying her actual age, turned against her cheating husband. She lifted her ID implanted wrist to my scanner. Expecting credits for trading in the life of her spouse, she was rightly perplexed when instead I grabbed her by the pussy and shoved her toward my comrades.

"Turn her over to the Protectorate Guard for arrest."

"You spoke out against your husband, woman," I said as she protested. "That is a capital offense and earns you a trip to the work camps." I turned to the husband, his stained and crooked teeth exposed as his lips curved upward. "You broke the sanctity of your vow to this woman-"

"But I didn't," he shouted. "She lies and harbors manly resentment. She is a suffragist."

I raised my brow as I turned to watch the woman being dragged away. Perhaps she was a supporter of the past, a believer in equality and rights for all. Those ways and mindsets were wiped away when

the country was made 'great again'. Delusion is not a crime but a sickness that can be conditioned away.

"What are the primary edicts of the New Republic?" I asked the man.

"The Edicts are as fake as the news played on the broadcast screens. This country is bathed in the blood, sweat, and tears of the oppressed. We gorge on the lies fed us and-"

The man's words cut off from the squeezing hand on the back of his neck.

My guard pulled the man off the ground and pushed the groveling man toward a prisoner transport. "What sentence has this Grunt earned, sir?"

As the accused begged for mercy, I turned for my transport and motioned my men to take the man away.

"Harvest him. I'm sure someone in the Elite cast could use a new kidney or some other salvageable part of this filthy Grunt."

Though I choked down the bile and remains of my breakfast at my own words, I would re-eat all of it to stay in my position. The punishment for a failure of duty is casting down. I'd sooner die than be lowered to the likes of the ninety-nine percent of the population.

Everyone worked. Everyone had food, shelter, basic healthcare. What the ninety-nine percent rarely got was decent work, quality food or shelter, adequate healthcare or the longevity treatments, education or a chance at a better life.

One of my patrols took me past an education center for the young children of the lower caste. Education is a stretch for the limited curriculum that was allowed to be taught to the Grunts. They were kept as uneducated as possible to limit ideas or critical thinking.

It serves no purpose to recognize those who have no use for more than what the state provides or to think about what was lost

when democracy was abolished. History lessons of times before the formation of the New Republic was not allowed unless rewritten by the Protectorate. All they were to know is what existed within the walls that bordered the country.

An Edict of the Protectorate: Keep the masses from knowing for they haven't the intellect to see the truth. The first of bullshit laws the Protectorate enforces to keep the people from rising up against their oppressors. If one doesn't know they are oppressed, then they are easier to control.

I looked around the sea of filthy-faced morons who filled the markets and trash-strewn streets. Beneath the soot and dirt was white skin. All that remained of the population of this country were those deemed worthy of being worked until death for the betterment of the Elite. All others were banished, imprisoned, or exterminated.

Looking at the Grunts, the overwhelming majority of what remained of the United States population after the Cleansing and Unifying Events, I began to notice more than a sea of faces. Trumpery made them feel that they had all they needed. The truth only comes to some at the end, when they peer past the blinding symbol of false representation and hypocrisy. Just then, as they peel away the layered words to reveal mendacity at the core, does one truly see. More and more of the population was waking up, but it would do no good to revolt—not yet.

My meandering thoughts kept me from my sworn duty. I got back into my transport and headed towards more Trumpery in another over-populated under-serviced city along the Great Wall of Freedom that kept the truth out of the New Republic and kept the Grunts in.

CHAPTER FIVE

I ordered my men to begin collecting the banned materials from the outer space. Thinking myself alone, I closed the door to the hidden room and started my own search for truth.

Thin plastic cases lined the shelves inside. I took one from the rack to find a round and metal coated disc. Written on the top in hand script of black it read The End of Democracy. I was vaguely educated in the past illusions of the government system. Some of the foreign nations in the world still clung to those failed principals.

I must have been mumbling to myself because I soon realized I wasn't alone.

“The principals of Democracy are not the failure, it is the practice and application that is to blame.”

McCord must have been in the room when I sealed the door. I know I locked it from the inside to avoid interruption.

“How does that matter today and here,” I asked.

McCord grunted and released a humorless snort. “It certainly hasn’t mattered in the New Republic or the former government, that is a certainty. There are many countries that have done better than the former United States.”

Just hearing the words the United States sent a shiver along my spine. Always remembering that uttering the censored words can get one killed.

“And what exactly went wrong with...the old Democracy here?”

I couldn’t bring myself to say United States aloud. I wasn’t yet comfortable with the outcome of McCord’s testing of me.

“Politics and politicians. None of it ever served the people. So few politicians were the public servants they should have been.”

McCord walked over to the shelves of discs. He thumbed along the spines until he found a particular disc and pulled it free. He repeated his search until he returned to me with a stack of recordings. Pointing to a machine on the table before me, McCord turned on the device and showed me how it worked.

My commander slid a disc into the box, and I must have flinched as the buzzing started because he laughed and patted me on the back.

“I admit these older digital disc machines are a bit noisy and clunky compared to our data chips and streams, but you will find the information...enlightening.”

I watched the screen before me light up, and words appear. A title for the recording displayed: The fall of the United States.

“What is this? I can’t watch-”

“Just watch these Dillon. I’ll see that your men clear up and leave. Find me when you have seen enough.”

I watched McCord leave. He paused only a moment as he

exited to give me a look that said more than he dared speak, as my men would have heard. Though his lips turned up only a tinge at the corners, his eyes held a desperate gleam of longing for the past.

As I turned back to the screen, I pressed the button that said Play on the monitor.

News reports played in quick succession. They began with the last election in the Democratic system of the United States. An outcome that both shocked and began dividing the nation. Though I was young and uninitiated to the Protectorate at the time, I had scattered memories of those days. Watching these news reports began to stitch together the fragments of my past that the conditioning had expected to obliterate. I was remembering.

A businessman and pseudo-celebrity sweet-talked and bullshitted his way into office. It was clearing in my mind as though just yesterday the riots and unrest began.

Progress in equality and peace were being stripped by new legislation. Former changes to the laws of the nation were getting reversed while bigotry, hate, violence, and ignorance flowered among the roots of lies being fed by the great orange orator.

The worst thing for a broken nation is a leader who places his ego before the people. The more newsreels I watched, the deeper my unsettled stomach sank.

I recalled the days when the lynching started. Immigrants were pulled from their homes and packed into trucks. Homosexuals went back into the closet for fear of being hunted down and strung up in the middle of the night. The government leaders painted over the further divide between the haves and the have-nots with rhetoric about morals and corruptions of the liberal and democratic minded.

The people of the nation bought every trumpery-coated word even when they could not buy food for their family. The new

President fattened up his flock with empty plates of trumpety, feeding their desperation for change. The change began so subtly and slow that by the time the annihilation came, there was no going back.

I changed the disc, sickened already by what I watched and remembered from my childhood. I needed to remember more, no matter the pain my retching caused as I watched the transition of the United States into what it had become.

Over a century and a half of life, and the human mind is said to drop memories to make way for new. They were all still there, buried deep. I began to wonder if I should leave them choking in the thick layers of filth the New Republic seeded in my head.

I pressed on. The next disc was titled *The Great Divide*. And as I watched it, replayed my own recollection of the seceding of states. I recalled less and less of the truth being played on the television. Censorship became more prevalent as the New Republic took shape. All truth labeled 'fake news' and replaced with what the President wanted releasing. What could not be covered up was the fact that more than half the country pulled free of the union and the United States was no more.

I was ten years old when the Unifying Event was triggered. Already taken from my family and being warded by the government, I was already ripened for conditioning to the travesties that would follow.

I remembered the concussive wave that knocked me to my ass. The rolling thundering in the air was just the beginning. Soon the skies blackened with dark clouds and then the ash began to fall. Yellowstone exploded. The great supervolcano erupted and devastated most of the country, bringing together the survivors. The government was there fast to support and aide. Some thought they arrived a bit too quickly.

I never thought much at that time of the reports of a flaming object falling from the skies above the national park. Few questioned the immediate and swift assistance our President offered in response. They forgot how he ignored the needs of those affected by disasters in the past.

Survival and finding loved ones, that was all anyone affected could focus upon. The helping hand of a benevolent leader was all they saw. The cost of that benevolence would come due sooner than anyone was prepared.

Watching these events from news recordings was surreal because I remembered them now. My own truths were surfacing and damping down the lies I lived over the last hundred and fifty years. I had seen enough, for now, it was more than my shattered mind could handle. If I could reverse the longevity I was granted to not spend another moment with the truth, I would have done so in those moments of despair. I was an agent of evil.

I pushed the stack of discs aside. As a case fell from the top, I noticed the back of the case had a label etched on it. Property of the Old Union Intelligence Agency. At that time, I had no knowledge of the Old Union, this would come later.

The Old Union did not form officially until well into the new regime of the New Republic. The surviving states and territories of the former western United States banded together and remained separatists from the reformation of the Eastern government.

How had this disc gotten here, I wondered. I opened the cover to find not a disc, but a modern data chip. I pulled the chip free of the case and began to look it over. The label accompanying the chip read: Unifying Event of a Mass Murderer.

A scream from outside prevented me putting the chip in my personal device to check its contents. I pocketed the chip and headed for the door. The information in this room was valuable but

deadly. Knowing about its existence placed a target squarely on my forehead. What was McCord playing at by introducing me to this place? He knew what this represented before we arrived.

I would have my chance to ask him about it as he was standing outside the shop when I exited. He said nothing to me, and McCord's expression was telling me, later, as he nudged his head toward my men harassing a family. I know he saw me fidgeting with something in my pocket, but still, he said nothing.

We walked toward my enforcers now circling a middle-aged, un-indoctrinated woman, meaning she was no longer fertile and not in the service of an Elite family. Only those in service to the New Republic or in the Upper Castes lived extended or healthy lives. These lowliest of the citizens were what was once called poor.

They were fed, clothed, had hard jobs and given the barest of medical needs, but anything more was scraps reclaimed from the refuse of the Elite or from the black market. They often worked and died on the wall or in what remained of the mines and refineries of fossil fuels.

The woman was found in possession of black market goods, at least that was the charge. It didn't require being a valid charge. The vast majority of violations were always fabrications or trumped up. There was little opportunity for criminal activity in the New Republic. Only crimes against the Edicts of the Protectorate became severe enough for punishment. This unfortunate woman was in the wrong path of some bored enforcers. And she was of mixed descent.

CHAPTER SIX

One of the enforcers grabbed the woman by the hair and forced her to the ground. As he lifted her hair, exposing the back of her neck, another man held a scanner to her skin. The ID chip implanted beneath transmitted her details. Name, caste rank, job designation, the names of her kin both alive and deceased. Her entire history and lineage scrolled on the Enforcer's device.

"Fallen fruit from a bad seed," the officer said. "Looks like you have some bad blood in the family line there Rosa."

She was of mixed Hispanic descent. This meant her family generations ago was split apart, and those without citizenship were deported while those who remained were designated as wall workers.

The President always said that Mexico would build the wall, and in a way they did. Any migrants who became citizens or their

descendants born in the then United States were gathered up and placed in work camps along the new border to begin building a wall separating the states from Mexico. When the country fell to the Unifying Event, those workers and any other migrant descendants of other countries became the labor force to build the new structure. The Great Wall separates the New Republic from the wastelands to the west of the Mississippi River. Once the wall was complete, those same laborers were banished.

“Why aren’t you at work on the wall, Grunt?” the enforcer asked. “You shouldn’t even be within the city market.”

Though she tried to explain her presence, my men would not hear her words. They wanted nothing more than to bully the unfortunate woman. Though a term of slang against the General Public Caste, it became a slight against anyone less-than. This woman was considered less-than not just because she was a member of the General Caste, but because she was of both a mixed race and a female.

My men pushed the woman back and forth between them, calling her names. I think they were trying to speak Spanish slurs but failed miserably. I knew some Spanish, not enough to speak it, but enough to know they were spitting gibberish. The woman likely did not even speak Spanish herself as it was banned long before she was born.

Two undernourished children were hiding behind a cart, flinching at the treatment of their mother. An Enforcer guard came up from behind them and dragged them forward. He held the children by the collars of their worn and tattered shirts.

“What have we here? Are these your children woman? They should be in a training program or shipped to the work camps more like it. Their tainted blood would make them useless to perform real work.”

The taunting continued, and both children whimpered but held back from crying. These kids have already learned the habits of the Enforcers. Their handlers were trying to instill fear, thinking it a sign of respect. The Enforcers made habits of these displays as examples to the gathering crowds and onlookers. They wanted both to be seen Enforcing the Edicts and also recognized as big tough men. They were small-minded brutes with moral compasses that only pointed down.

I wanted to intercede, but Commander McCord stopped me with a hand to the chest as I moved forward. With my emotions reeling after the flood of memories coalesced in the forefront of my mind, I was compelled to act. The more I pushed against McCord's restraining arm, the harder he pushed back.

"Now's not the time, my boy," McCord said. He kept his voice low and steady. "You can do little for her now that would not affect your own station in the New Republic. We are at a tipping point as you'll soon come to understand."

McCord pulled his hand back and revealed the flyer and data chip that was in my pocket. His hand was so skilled at lifting them I never knew they were missing. I had been fumbling with them in my pocket to the extent that I must have grown numb to the feeling of movement. That or he was a skilled thief.

Putting the contraband back in my pocket, McCord turned to me. "You are going to remember and see more disturbing things than what happens here in the open streets. You'll have to learn restraint and covert tactics if you are to become part of the Resistance."

I was never one to become surprised or display confusion, but my face must have painted a pretty sight.

McCord furrowed his brow and pulled me aside. "You must not show any emotion. You must not appear to be breaking the edicts.

You must learn to work around them and in secret.”

“I really don't-”

McCord interrupted and pushed a small handwritten book entitled, ‘New Polari’, into my hands.

“Say nothing now, but learn the words and phrases in this book. Observe and then act when you can and only in a manner that does not reveal your duplicity. I chose you for many reasons that will become clear over time. For now, just follow my lead.”

I relaxed my face and closed my mouth. I had no words at that moment to express the spinning of ideas and facts versus falsities rattling my thoughts. The brief and minute expression of knowing that McCord gave me with a brow twitch and curled lower lip was inadequate toward easing my turmoil. It was the best I would get at the time.

As we returned our attention to the badgering of Rosa and her children, I could only watch as they separated the woman from her two kids. She would be sent back to the wall, being of no use to the birthing centers at her age. The children would be assessed and placed into programs suitable to their intellect, but not above their foul bloodline.

The collection of children was commonly done in this era, though not illegal, it had fallen out of practice not long after I was graduated to the status of level-one Enforcer. My thirtieth year of age, the day I was indoctrinated into the Protectorate and given long-life.

Long-life was the term associated with the injection of a biologically altered parasite at the base of the skull. This parasite attached itself to the brain and altered the way the body regenerated. This caused the extension of human life by decades or more depending on the person. On occasion, it also deepened personality traits, especially in the early days. That is when the mad

leader of the New Republic completely lost his shit.

In the case of my men, some of them became more brutish and heartless, but they remained obedient.

Thoughts of my removal from my own family accompanied the words that slipped from my mouth. Both came without warning.

“Release the children,” I said as I stepped free of McCord’s reach. “Send the woman back, but I will see to the assignment of the children to proper programs.”

I was overreaching my authority, and my men knew this. The problem some would think is that my main personality trait became enhanced by the parasite in my head. I was compassionate beyond what was typical for a Protectorate soldier. Which is to say I didn’t kill on the spot.

When the realization of my blunder began to settle from my lips to my head, I had barely registered McCord’s order for the men to do as I instructed.

“You’ve apparently not taken a word I said to heart Dillon. An order like that can only come from a high ranking protectorate commander.”

“I apologize for my insubordination Commander. It was an impulse brought on by a returned memory.”

McCord again gave me another reassuring expression before motioning the children to be taken to an awaiting transport. He stopped me outside the vehicle.

“Tell me about that memory.”

“It’s more feeling than memory as it yet resurges from the folds of my subconscious. But I recall the unfair assessments and mismanaged placement. I remember the stinging on my body from the beatings that accompanied both success and failure. I remember being moved from program to program until I was fitted within the Protectorate Enforcers.”

“And was that not a good fit?”

“In the end, I suppose. But the suffering and treatment of children is not something that is required today.”

“The assessment is much better today than it was over a century ago when you went through the programs,” McCord reassured me.

“There is still room for improvement in the processes and appraisals. The treatment, however, remains barbaric. Unfortunately, I haven’t the rank to do anything about it.”

McCord nodded and pushed me toward the transport full of children. “Perhaps I can help do something about that.”