

P R O T O C O L

by

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The wind HOWLS in the darkness.

SUPER:

"In the year 2079 the global economy collapsed. By the turn of the century, nearly all natural resources were depleted. The nations of the world, weakened by decades of overpopulation and greed, stood at the edge of the precipice.

It was at this time, with society on the brink of collapse, when world leaders decided that large scale government was no longer practical. It was agreed that the only option to retain any semblance of order was to revert to a much older system of government; their mandate declared that individual city-states would govern themselves, and operate within the limits of their own resources and populous."

FADE IN:

EXT. WASTELAND -- DAY

SUPER:

"Under the new caste system, citizenship is only a birthright for the elite."

In the distance, near the horizon, we can barely make out the outline of a domed city.

EXT. CASIA CITY -- DAY

A closer look at the city. A lone remnant of civilization in an otherwise lifeless landscape, it protrudes out of the desert floor like a diamond in the sand.

INT. WAITING ROOM - IMMIGRATION ANNEX -- DAY

Grey concrete walls. A bleak, joyless environment. Virtually devoid of color except for the Casia City logo animation looping on the wall monitor. Suddenly the images changes to that of the city's spokesperson; an artificial intelligence in the form of a beautiful VIRTUAL WOMAN.

VIRTUAL WOMAN

(on screen)

A citizen's duty is never done.

A MAN, thirty, sits on a metal seat, waiting. Behind him, through a large window, we can see the city skyline. It is breathtaking. The architecture is sleek. Sky-scrapers, all glass and steel, gleam in the sunlight, in sharp contrast to the gold and orange hues of the wasteland outside.

VIRTUAL WOMAN (O.S.)

Effective immediately, access to the recreation decks are hereby restricted to Class A and B citizens. Do your duty and report any violators to your district supervisor.

(beat)

A citizen's duty is never done.

We get a closer look at the man. Bags under his eyes, malnourished and pale. His clothes are bland and colorless, consisting of a grey coverall style jumpsuit and worn work boots. An ID patch on his chest identifies him as MEEKS 9148: a Class C resident.

Meeks glances over at SARA, thirty, seated a few chairs down. Her clothes are like his, her hair in a bun. She bites her nails anxiously, lost in her thoughts, then notices him staring.

VIRTUAL WOMAN (O.S.)

Casia City, the jewel of Section AE259...

As they make eye contact, Meeks attempts a weak smile. She responds with a sad grin. In this moment there is an unspoken bond between them; but the moment quickly fades as Sara looks away sadly. Meets' eyes linger on her a second longer before he looks down to the floor.

VIRTUAL WOMAN (O.S.)

...if you are 15 years or younger, and have not yet declared a career, Governor Humphrey urges you to join the Security Apparatus and extend your stay. Earn double-time work credits towards your Class B citizenship and a help build a better tomorrow, today.

(beat)

A citizen's duty is never-

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - IMMIGRATION ANNEX -- DAY

A GUARD shows Meeks in and leaves, closing the door. The lock BUZZES as it shuts.

Meeks looks around sheepishly. It is dark. Some daylight streams through a pair of small windows on the rear wall. A metallic lamp hangs from the ceiling.

In the center of the room, seated behind an oversized metal desk is CARTER: early thirties, good looking. He wears a suit and a smug grin as he toys with his holographic PDA, too preoccupied to notice Meeks, who stands there awkwardly. After a moment, Carter looks up and sees him.

CARTER

Didn't realize you were there.

Carter puts away his PDA and picks up an electronic dossier off his desk, flipping it open. A slick animation of the Casia City logo loops on a giant monitor on the wall behind him.

CARTER

So... Meeks. I'm Jeremy Carter, the third. I'll be handling your case.

Carter scans through the file briefly. He notices that Meeks is still standing.

CARTER

You can sit down.

Meeks does, clearing his throat.

MEEKS

Than... thank you.

Carter returns his attention to the file.

CARTER

Scrubber tech in air filtration.  
(looks up)  
Why'd you pick that career?

MEEKS

Contribute to the community. Do my duty.

Carter studies him for a moment.

CARTER

Look I'm not the one you got to impress.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)  
I'm just trying to present your case in the best light. Give you a chance to get selected, OK?

Meeks nods, unsure of how to proceed.

MEEKS  
They said it would help me qualify for citizenship. Because of the hazard duty.

CARTER  
It helps.

Carter flips through the file.

CARTER  
It's not the Security Apparatus, but it helps.

MEEKS  
I applied to the academy...  
(hesitates)  
...but I had asthma as a kid.

CARTER  
Yeah, I see that. DNA analysis also showed a predisposition to heart disease. That's not going to help your case. Unhealthy citizens are costly to care for.

MEEKS  
(nervous)  
The asthma hasn't been a problem for years though. I've been working fourteen hours days in the vents since I was fifteen.

CARTER  
That's a good point.

Carter makes a note on the file. He flips to another section.

CARTER  
OK, let's see how you scored on your aptitude tests.  
(shakes his head)  
Your numbers aren't bad but there's nothing that really stands out.

Carter makes another note.

CARTER  
You did do pretty well in applied  
mechanics and civics.  
(reading file)  
Who's your sponsor?

MEEKS  
Mister Jonathan Douglas, from the  
Trade Ministry.

Carter looks away from the file in disappointment.

CARTER  
He's a first generation Class B.  
(sighs)  
It'd help if you had a legacy  
vouching for you.

Carter makes a final note and closes the file.

CARTER  
Well I'll be honest with you, it's  
not the strongest case I've seen,  
but I think you've got a shot.

Meeks smirks shyly, almost afraid to hope.

CARTER  
(beat)  
Any questions before we start?

Meeks begins to shake his head no, but stops.

MEEKS  
My volunteer record's in there,  
right? I volunteered once a week at  
the medical ward, and twice a month  
at the Education Ministry.

CARTER  
It's there. Anything else?

Meeks nods no.

CARTER  
OK then, let's begin.

Carter stands up and turns towards the flat screen on the wall. Meeks follows suit. Carter hits a button on his clipboard and the monitor switches to...

ON MONITOR: MAGISTRATE WILSON, larger than life. His face fills every inch of the massive flat screen.

CARTER  
Immigration hearing for MEEKS 9148  
in session. His Excellency, Lord  
Wilson presiding.

MAGISTRATE  
Very well Mister Carter. You may  
proceed.

Carter hits a button on his clipboard.

CARTER  
I've uploaded the case file sir.

The Magistrate reads through the file. Meeks looks over to  
Carter for reassurance and gets a half enthusiastic nod.

MAGISTRATE  
After reviewing the application, it  
is my finding that the applicant  
does not meet the criteria for  
Class B citizenship. Because he is  
thirty years of age, and therefore  
no longer eligible for Class C  
residency, MEEKS 9148 is hereby  
ordered to report for deportation  
or accept the alternative within  
twenty four hours.

Meeks stands there in shock, unable to believe how fast this  
is happening.

CARTER  
Understood your Excellency. Thank  
you for your time.

MAGISTRATE  
Oh and Carter, do remind your  
father to call. He still owes me a  
round from our last game.

CARTER  
Will do sir.

The screen returns to the Casia City logo.

MEEKS  
(still in disbelief)  
But you... didn't even say  
anything.

CARTER

That's the protocol. Everything's in your file. You just didn't have that strong of a case.

MEEKS

But I did hazard duty. Volunteered. I did everything you they told me to.

Carter seems like he is growing more uncomfortable by the second.

CARTER

Hey if I could make everyone permanent, I would, but we don't have the room for that. You've lived a full life. How long would you have survived out there?

MEEKS

You mean where you're sending me now?

CARTER

Don't be ridiculous. You'd be crazy to choose the wasteland over the alternative.

Carter pushes a button on his clipboard.

CARTER

Look, you got twenty four hours to settle your affairs. Take the alternative. It's the least we can do for your years of service. The city will cover all the costs of euthanization and give you a proper disposal. It's painless, very humane actually.

Meeks stares at Carter, tears welling up in his eyes.

MEEKS

I guess I should say thank you then.

The door BUZZES open and the guard walks in. Meeks and Carter share one last awkward moment before Meeks drops his head and follows the guard out. Carter sits back down and turns his attention to his PDA.



The lock BUZZES as the door shuts.

FADE OUT.