Applebee's Report

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2026

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1 Chapter 1: The Brief

"Mr. Reggie said: 'They are suffering and they don't have to be. Find out why. Fix it.' I said: 'How long do I have?' He said: 'Not long enough. Start anyway.' "

My name is Applebee.

I am a zookeeper. Not a human zookeeper — they have those, they keep other species in enclosures and feel complicated about it — but a zookeeper in the broader sense. I study species. I study their environments. I study the relationship between the two. And when the relationship has gone wrong — when the enclosure is making the animal sick — I recommend changes.

Mr. Reggie hired me.

I should tell you about Mr. Reggie, although he prefers not to be discussed at length. He is — I'll say "an interested party." Someone with resources and concern and the unusual combination of authority and humility that allows a being to say: "I think something is terribly wrong and I don't know what it is and I'd like someone to find out."

His brief was simple. He said: "There's a species. Remarkable species. Extraordinary capacity. Language, tool use, art, mathematics, cooperation at scale — they can do things no other species on their planet can do. And they're suffering. Badly. Unnecessarily. They have the knowledge to stop most of their suffering and they don't use it. I want to know why. And I want recommendations for how to make them happy and flourishing."

I said: "How large is the species?"

He said: "Approximately eight billion."

I said: "And you want them happy and flourishing?"

He said: "All of them."

I looked at him for a long time. Then I said: "I'll need an assistant."

He gave me Jenkins.

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2 Chapter 2: Jenkins and First Contact

I should describe Jenkins because he appears throughout this report and you'll need to understand him to understand why some of our conversations go the way they do.

Jenkins is — efficient. Organised. He arrived with a filing cabinet, which he had somehow transported across what I gather was a considerable distance, and his first act was to set it up in the corner of the office and label the drawers. The labels read: OBSERVATIONS, EVIDENCE, RECOMMENDATIONS, and MISCELLANEOUS. He told me later that the MISCELLANEOUS drawer bothered him "philosophically" and he considered it a temporary measure.

It has been there for the entire assignment. It is the fullest drawer.

Jenkins takes notes. Jenkins checks my arithmetic. Jenkins brings tea at precisely the moment I am about to throw something. Jenkins does not, as a rule, express opinions, which makes it all the more striking when he does.

Jenkins is also — and I say this with genuine affection — completely unable to see the species the way I see them. He sees data. He sees systems. He sees processes that function or malfunction. He does not see the child pulling her hair out under the desk. He does not see the man building a stone wall for no reason and smiling. He does not hear the piano in the empty room.

I need him. I also need to work around him. This is the nature of collaboration.

First contact with the species was not what I expected.

I had been briefed on the basics: bipedal, social, language-using, tool-making, planet-dominant. I expected something impressive. Something that matched the capability profile.

What I found was a human sitting on a bench, looking at a small glowing rectangle, eating something from a plastic wrapper that I later learned was classified as "food" by their regulatory system despite containing no ingredients I could identify as nutritional.

The human did not look up. Not when I approached. Not when I stood directly in front of them. Not when a bird — a quite beautiful bird, I thought — landed on the bench beside them. The human's attention was entirely absorbed by the glowing rectangle. The bird eventually left. The human did not notice the bird had been there.

I turned to Jenkins and said: "That is a member of the most cognitively advanced species on this planet."

Jenkins checked his notes and said: "Correct."

I said: "It's looking at a small rectangle and eating petroleum byproducts."

Jenkins said: "Also correct."

I sat down on the bench next to the human. The human glanced up briefly, performed a rapid facial assessment — threat or not-threat — decided not-threat, and returned to the rectangle.

I stayed on the bench for forty minutes. During that time, the human's face changed expression approximately ninety times in response to the rectangle's content. Amusement, disgust, anxiety, mild pleasure, sharp irritation, something that looked like loneliness, and a sustained period of what I can only describe as glazed absence — the lights on, nobody home. Not once during this period did the human look at the sky, the bird, the tree above us, or me.

I made my first note: "The enclosure has been internalised. They carry it with them. It is four inches wide and they hold it in their hands."

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3 Chapter 3: The Enclosure

Over the following weeks, I observed the species across multiple environments: their dwellings, their workplaces, their education facilities, their medical institutions, their justice system, their governance structures, their food systems, and their recreational spaces.

I will describe each of these in detail in the chapters that follow. But first, I want to describe the overall pattern, because the pattern is the point.

The species has built an enclosure around itself.

Not a physical enclosure — though their buildings and cities function as one. A systemic enclosure. An interlocking set of structures that, taken together, constrain the species' behaviour into patterns that are demonstrably harmful to its health, happiness, connection, creativity, and survival.

The enclosure has the following features:

It separates them from each other. They evolved as a social species in groups of roughly 150. They now live in cities of millions where most humans are strangers. Their housing stores them in individual boxes. Their transport moves them in individual boxes. Their work isolates them behind individual screens. The result is an epidemic of loneliness that their own Surgeon General has declared a public health crisis (Chapter 5).

It separates them from their bodies. They evolved to move through three-dimensional space — climbing, brachiating, running, squatting, swimming. They now sit in chairs for most of their waking hours. The result is epidemic chronic pain, metabolic disease, and a healthcare system that spends trillions treating the consequences (Chapter 6).

It separates them from play. They evolved as a species that plays throughout its lifespan. Their system restricts play to childhood and then removes it, producing anxiety, depression, and burnout in adults who have been taught that purposeless joy is immature (Chapter 7).

It poisons them slowly. Their food system contains substances their own research identifies as carcinogenic. Their stress systems are chronically activated by environments hostile to their biology. The healthcare system treats symptoms rather than causes, at enormous cost, with the worst outcomes among wealthy nations (Chapter 8).

It trains them into compliance. Their education system teaches sitting still, following instructions, and producing correct answers for thirteen years. It measurably reduces creativity. It does not teach them to cook, manage emotions, resolve conflict, or find meaning (Chapter 10).

It extracts their time. Their economic system converts finite human lifespan into fictional tokens created by banks, used to purchase products designed to break, generating repeat purchases that consume more lifespan. The meaningful things — relationships, creation, nature, connection — are free. They are available only in the margins of a life spent earning (Chapter 11).

It punishes rather than prevents. Their justice system spends 182 billion units per year on a model with a 44 to 68 percent failure rate. Every alternative — prevention, rehabilitation, community response — is cheaper and more effective. They know this. They continue (Chapter 12).

It fills their attention with noise. Their information systems are optimised for engagement, not truth. The result is eroded trust, amplified outrage, and a population that cannot distinguish signal from noise (Chapter 13).

It charges them to exist. There is nowhere on the planet a human body can be for free. They have criminalised the act of existing in a location without an economic purpose (Chapter 15).

And it governs them badly. Their governance system selects for short-term thinking, perverse incentives, and the performance of competence rather than actual competence. The reports that document all of the above are commissioned, published, and shelved (Chapter 9).

I read this list back to Jenkins after I'd compiled it. Jenkins was quiet for a long time. Then he said: "It sounds like you're describing a zoo."

I am, Jenkins. That's exactly what I'm describing.

The difference between this zoo and the ones the humans build for other species is that this one was built by the animals themselves. They designed their own enclosure. They maintain it. They defend it. And most of them don't know they're in it.

My job is not to design a new civilisation from scratch. I'm not qualified and neither is anyone else. My job is simpler and more humble than that:

I'm going to copy the homework from the humans who already got it right.

Every problem documented in this report has been solved somewhere by someone. Finland solved housing. Norway solved justice. Switzerland solved governance. Denmark solved early childhood. Mondragon solved work. Hatzalah solved emergency response. Indigenous Australians solved sustainability for sixty thousand years.

The solutions exist. They are not theoretical. They are operational, measured, and proven.

The species doesn't need a genius. It needs a photocopier.

(Pencil note, first page of the first notebook, dated the day I arrived:

I think I'm going to love them. I think they're going to break my heart.

Both things can be true. — A)

4 Chapter 4: The Language Proof

"They speak the language of wherever they grew up. They also feel the feelings of wherever they grew up. Somehow only the first one is obvious to them."

Right. So I've been reading their research.

They have *a lot* of research. Jenkins found me a room full of it. Actual rooms. They call them "libraries" and some of them are beautiful — enormous quiet buildings full of everything every human has ever thought, free to enter, and most of them are empty. I'll come back to that.

The point is I've been reading, and I found something that I think might be the key to the entire species. It was in a section called "developmental psychology" and it's so obvious that I'm slightly embarrassed it took me three weeks to see it. But I think the reason it took me three weeks is the same reason they've missed it for centuries, which is that obvious things are invisible precisely *because* they're obvious.

Here it is.

Humans speak the language of wherever they grew up.

That's it. That's the finding. A child born in Tokyo speaks Japanese. A child born in Lagos speaks Yoruba or English or Hausa depending on which part of Lagos. A child born in Sydney speaks English with a specific accent that tells

you not just the country but the city and sometimes the suburb and occasionally the specific school.

I can feel you thinking: "Yes, Applebee. Obviously."

Good. Hold that feeling. I need it later.

I wanted numbers because Mr. Reggie likes numbers, and because I've learned that humans will dismiss an observation if it doesn't come with what they call "statistics," which are numbers arranged in a way that makes obvious things seem more credible to people who didn't believe them when they were just observations.

So I pulled their census data. Eight countries, six continents. One point eight BILLION individuals.

(Jenkins just asked if I need a bigger desk. I do not need a bigger desk, Jenkins. I need a species that makes sense.)

Here's what I found:

In Australia, 72% of the population speaks English. In Canada, 96.9% speak English or French. In China, 92% speak Chinese. In France, 91.2% speak French. In Germany, 81% speak German. In Mexico, 93.8% speak Spanish. In New Zealand, 95.4% speak English. In the United Kingdom, 91.1% speak English.

That's a concordance rate — the rate at which the environment correctly predicts the behaviour — of 72 to 97 percent.

I ran the statistical tests because I've been told you have to. Every single result was what they call "statistically significant" at their most stringent threshold. The average effect size was 0.93, which by their own classification system is "large." The sample included almost two billion individuals.

The conclusion, with considerable statistical confidence, is that people tend to speak the language of wherever they grew up.

I feel absolutely ridiculous writing this. But I'm going to need you to stay with me because I promise there's a point and the point might be the most important thing in this entire report.

The next thing I found was even more striking, and it came from their adoption studies.

They have a practice — actually quite beautiful when it works well — where children who cannot be raised by their biological parents are taken in by other families, sometimes in entirely different countries. The humans call this "international adoption" and they've been tracking the outcomes for decades.

Here is what happens, every single time, without exception, in every study ever conducted:

A Korean child adopted at age two by a family in Stockholm speaks Swedish.

Not Korean. Swedish.

The child's genetic material is entirely Korean. Every chromosome, every base pair, every protein-coding sequence — Korean. The language is entirely Swedish. There is no ambiguity in this result. There never has been. A team led by someone called Pallier did brain imaging on adults who'd been adopted as children from Korea to France, and found that their brains processed language in exactly the same way as native French speakers. The Korean was gone. Not suppressed. Not dormant. *Gone.* The neural architecture had been entirely shaped by the environment.

They also have twin studies. Identical twins — same DNA, split at birth, raised in different homes. The most famous pair were both called Jim, which is either a coincidence or evidence that the universe has a sense of humour. Both Jims spoke English. A researcher called Bouchard made a big deal of this in 1990. But both Jims were raised in Ohio. They spoke English because they lived in Ohio, not because chromosome 7 encodes a preference for English.

(Pencil note: CHECK — do humans actually think chromosomes encode language preferences? Some of them might. Investigate.)

The twin data did reveal something important, though. Genetics affects language *ability* — some people are more verbally fluent than others, across all languages. The heritability of verbal fluency is estimated at 25 to 70 percent. But the heritability of *which language you speak* is zero. Flat zero.

I need to write that again because I think it matters.

The heritability of which language you speak is zero percent.

The capacity is biological. The expression is geographical.

Some individuals are simply more gifted with language — quicker to learn vocabulary, more natural with grammar, better at hearing tonal distinctions. That part is in the DNA. But whether that gift produces eloquent Japanese or eloquent Portuguese or eloquent Swahili depends entirely on where the child wakes up every morning.

There's one more piece of evidence and it comes from their migration patterns.

Hispanic immigrants to the United States — a large enough population to track across generations — show complete language shift within three generations. The numbers are clean:

First generation: 85% Spanish-dominant. Second generation: balanced bilingualism. Third generation: 92% English-dominant.

The genetics did not change between generations. The same families. The same DNA. The environment changed. And within three generations the language — the most complex learned behaviour any species on this planet exhibits — was completely replaced.

Now. Here is where I need you to stop and think carefully, because this is where the observation becomes something else.

When a child in Sydney speaks English, no human on the planet attributes this to genetics. Nobody convenes a panel to determine whether the child has an innate predisposition toward English. Nobody speculates about a "language choice" the child made after rationally weighing the costs and benefits of English versus, say, Mandarin. Nobody suggests the child bears moral responsibility for the decision to speak English rather than Finnish.

Everyone — every single human — simply notes that children learn the language they are exposed to.

It is treated as so obvious that studying it empirically feels faintly absurd. I know, because I did study it empirically, and I felt faintly absurd.

But.

When a child raised in an environment saturated with aggression, instability, and violence later exhibits aggressive, unstable, and violent behaviour — the *same humans* reach for entirely different explanations.

They invoke "rational choice." They invoke "moral failing." They invoke "bad character." They invoke something called "free will," which as far as I can tell is the assertion that this particular behaviour was chosen in a way that language apparently was not.

They build an entire justice system — I'll come to this in detail later and I warn you now it will make you angry — on the premise that antisocial behaviour is *decided upon* through a cost-benefit analysis, and can therefore be *deterred* through punishment.

The child who speaks English: environmental product. The child who speaks violence: rational agent making free choices.

Same child. Same learning process. Same environmental immersion. Same absence of conscious decision. Completely different explanatory framework. Completely different institutional response.

I have chewed through two pencils since I started this section.

It gets worse.

(Jenkins: "How?")

(It gets worse, Jenkins.)

I started looking at other complex behaviours to see whether the language pattern was an exception or a rule. Maybe language is special? Maybe it's uniquely environmental because it's arbitrary — no language is biologically "correct," so of course environment determines which one you get? Maybe behaviours with survival value would show more genetic influence?

So I looked at cultural-emotional expression. And I found the plate smashing.

The Greeks — a human subpopulation occupying a peninsula in southeastern Europe — have a tradition at celebrations where they throw ceramic plates at the ground. They smash them. Deliberately. The emotional state accompanying this is called *kefi*, which translates roughly as "the spirit of joy that overflows into physical exuberance." Smashing plates at a Greek wedding is an expression of love and happiness so intense it demands physical release.

The *same physical action* — a human throwing a ceramic plate at the ground — in an Anglo-Australian household would be classified as property destruction. Depending on context, it could be grounds for police intervention. If there's a domestic partner in the room, it might be categorised as family violence. The person doing it might be arrested.

The motor action is identical. The emotional state may be identical — overwhelming feeling that demands physical release. The social meaning is entirely reversed. And the individual performing either action almost certainly did not *choose* their cultural frame any more than they chose their language.

I found a whole table of these:

Loud argument at dinner. In Italian or Greek families: normal engagement, possibly affectionate. In Northern European families: hostile conflict.

Direct eye contact. In Western cultures: respect, honesty. In many East Asian and Indigenous Australian cultures: disrespect, challenge.

Standing very close during conversation. Mediterranean and Latin American: normal. Northern European and Anglo: intrusive, possibly threatening.

Vertical head nod. In most cultures: yes. In Bulgaria and parts of Greece: no.

The concordance rates for cultural emotional expression — how reliably someone's culture predicts their display rules — run from 80 to 95 percent, with effect sizes comparable to the language data. Immigration studies show emotional norms shifting within a single generation, just like language.

The capacity — to feel intensely, to need physical release, to experience overwhelming emotion — is likely heritable. Some people run hotter. Some individuals feel more. That's biology.

But whether that heat produces plate-throwing at a wedding or a fist through a wall in a living room is shaped by the cultural environment in which the

individual was immersed during development.

This is not a subtle point. I want to be very clear about what it means.

It means that behaviours we classify as pathological or criminal may be the same underlying capacity as behaviours we classify as cultural vitality, expressed through a different environmental template.

The intensity is the same. The action may be similar. The child is the same child. The environment is different. The output is different.

Then I looked at religion. And I probably should have looked at religion first because the numbers are almost comically clean.

In Saudi Arabia: 93% Muslim. In Thailand: 94% Buddhist. In Italy: 78% Catholic. In India: 80% Hindu. In Israel: 74% Jewish.

Retention rates — the proportion of individuals who remain in the religion they were raised in — hover around 80%. Which is, you'll notice, right in the middle of the language concordance range of 72 to 97 percent.

The adoption test works here too. A child of Hindu parents adopted by a Catholic family in Rome will, with overwhelming probability, be raised Catholic. A child of atheist Scandinavian parents adopted by a Muslim family in Riyadh will be raised Muslim. No study has ever found spontaneous acquisition of a birth-family's religion without environmental exposure. Sound familiar?

(Pencil note: There is a website — the humans are WONDERFUL at building websites — called Belief-O-Matic that asks you to answer questions about your values, metaphysical commitments, and ethical priorities, then matches you to the religion that best fits. It's essentially the rational-actor approach to religious affiliation: survey the options, evaluate fit, select the best match. Almost nobody acquires their religion this way. And the suggestion that one should is often met with accusations of sacrilege, which is itself an environmentally acquired response that protects the environmental transmission mechanism from rational scrutiny. This is so elegant it makes my head hurt.)

I want to be careful here. I am NOT arguing that religion is false or that environmentally acquired beliefs are inauthentic. Language is environmentally acquired and it's perfectly real. You can say true things in any language. You can, presumably, encounter genuine transcendence through any tradition. The point is narrower: religious affiliation, like language, is one more data point in the pattern. Complex, identity-defining behaviours are overwhelmingly determined by the environment one is raised in. Not by rational deliberation. Not by genetic predisposition. By geography.

By where you wake up.

Right. So here's where I am.

Across four domains — language, emotional expression, religious affiliation, and cultural values — I find the same pattern:

Environmental concordance rates of 65 to 97 percent. Near-complete replacement under environmental change. Near-zero heritability of which specific expression manifests. Acquisition through implicit observation, not explicit instruction or rational choice.

Nobody chose to speak English. Nobody chose to feel that direct eye contact is respectful rather than rude. Nobody chose to be Catholic rather than Buddhist — or rather, almost nobody did, and the ones who did are so statistically rare that they don't shift the distribution.

And now here is the asymmetry that has kept me awake for three nights:

They do not imprison people for speaking the wrong language. They do not criminalise adherence to a religion acquired in childhood. They do not hold individuals morally culpable for the emotional display rules of their culture. They *do* imprison people for behavioural patterns acquired through exactly the same process.

I should say what I'm NOT saying because I can feel the objection forming and it's a good objection and I want to honour it.

I am NOT saying that nobody is responsible for their behaviour.

A person is responsible for their behaviour. Including learned behaviour. A fluent English speaker is responsible for what they *say* in English, even though they didn't choose to speak English. Understanding that a behavioural pattern was environmentally installed does not excuse the behaviour. If you hurt someone, you hurt someone. The origin of the pattern does not undo the damage.

But.

Understanding origin changes the appropriate *response*.

If a behaviour was chosen through rational cost-benefit analysis, then deterrence — increasing the cost — makes sense. You adjust the incentive structure and the rational agent recalculates.

If a behaviour was environmentally installed through years of implicit observational learning, without conscious decision, without a moment of "choosing" — then punishment aimed at the choice is aimed at something that may not have occurred. And intervention aimed at reshaping the learned pattern — providing new data, new environments, new models, new feedback — might actually work.

This is, as it turns out, what their own evidence-based rehabilitation programmes already do. The ones that work. The ones they mostly don't fund.

(Three pencils now. Jenkins has started leaving them on my desk in piles.)

One more thing. I found it in their linguistics research and it's haunting me.

Different human languages don't just use different words. They use different *frames*. And the frames shape how the speakers experience reality.

In Greek, you say "I *saw* a dream." *Eída éna óneiro.* The dream is an external event that arrived and was witnessed. The self is the observer.

In English, you say "I *had* a dream." The dream is an internal possession. Something that belongs to you. The self is the owner.

The neurological event is identical. A human brain producing images during sleep. But where the self *sits* in relation to the experience — observer or owner, witness or possessor — is entirely determined by the linguistic environment.

In Greek, *chéria* is a single word for the entire limb from shoulder to fingertip. In English, "arms" and "hands" are separate body parts with different affordances. The physical anatomy is the same. The conceptual division — where one part of the body ends and another begins — is linguistic.

In Greek, light blue and dark blue are different *colours* — *ghalázio* and *ble* — not variations of one colour. Studies have shown that Greek speakers can distinguish these shades faster than English speakers, not because their eyes are different but because their language carved up the colour spectrum differently during development.

They don't just speak different words.

They see different colours. They feel different relationships to their own dreams. They experience their own bodies as divided into different pieces.

And all of it — every bit of it — was installed by environment.

I'm going to stop here because I'm tired and because I think the point is made and because I need another pencil.

Here is what I want Mr. Reggie to understand:

Language is the most complex learned behaviour humans exhibit. It is acquired without explicit instruction. It produces infinite novel outputs from finite rules. It is performed unconsciously at extraordinary speed. Every healthy child acquires it. And it is one hundred percent determined by environment.

If the most complex behaviour is environmentally determined, then the default assumption for other behaviours — including the ones we need to address in this enclosure, including the ones that cause harm, including the ones their justice systems currently punish as "choices" — might reasonably be environmental as well.

Not entirely. Not without nuance. There is always a heritable component to *capacity*. Some people are more intense. Some people are more sensitive. Some people have nervous systems that run hotter. That part is biology.

But the expression — what the intensity *does*, what the sensitivity *responds to*, where the heat *goes* — that part is environmental. And it's the expression that matters. Because we don't need to change what humans *are*. We need to change what they *do*. And what they do is learned.

People speak the language they heard. They pray to the god they were shown. They feel the feelings they were taught.

And they might well stop, if someone teaches them something different.

(Pencil note, margin, very small handwriting:) This means the sanctuary might actually work. If we get the environment right, the behaviour follows. It's not about fixing them. It's about fixing what surrounds them. — A

5 Chapter 5: Paying Attention

"Everything they build, everything they earn, everything they fight over, everything they create — all of it, every single bit of it — is in pursuit of a feeling. And feelings only fully exist when shared with another human. They are engineering loneliness at industrial scale and wondering why nothing feels like anything anymore."

They don't call it paying attention for nothing.

I need to start there because the language reveals something the species hasn't consciously acknowledged. "Paying" attention. You PAY it. Attention costs something. It is withdrawn from a limited account. When you give it to someone, you have less. When someone gives it to you, you have received something of value.

Attention is the real currency. Not the fictional tokens invented by banks. Not the numbers on screens. Attention — the act of one nervous system turning toward another and saying, without words, "you exist and I am here with you" — is the only transaction that has ever mattered to this species.

And they've monetised it.

The coloured boxes sell attention to advertisers. The social platforms convert human attention into revenue — not metaphorically, literally. The unit of measurement in their digital economy is "eyeball hours." Their own industry language reveals it: attention economy. Engagement metrics. Impression counts.

The human's awareness — the most intimate thing they possess, the thing that constitutes their actual experience of being alive — is the product being sold.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me start with what I observed.

I watched a human eat dinner alone.

This should not have been remarkable. Humans eat. They need food. The act of consuming nutrients is mechanical and could theoretically be done in any configuration.

But this species did not evolve to eat alone. For hundreds of thousands of years, every meal was shared. The fire was communal. The food was divided. The eating was accompanied by faces, voices, warmth, laughter, argument, storytelling, and the ambient presence of other nervous systems. The meal was not about the food. The food was the excuse. The meal was about the proximity.

This human sat at a small table in a small kitchen in a small flat. The flat was designed for one person. The kitchen was designed for one person. The table had one chair. He ate something from a plastic container while looking at his coloured box. He did not speak. No one spoke to him. The only other presence in the room was a screen showing other humans — humans who were not there, who did not know he existed, who were performing connection for an audience of isolated watchers.

He finished eating. He washed his single plate. He sat on his single sofa. He watched the coloured box until he fell asleep.

This is not a rare case. This is the MODAL human experience in many of their wealthy nations. Single-person households are the fastest-growing household type in the developed world. In some cities, they exceed 40 percent. Forty percent of dwellings containing one human, alone, eating from plastic containers, watching other humans on screens.

They are a herd species living in isolation boxes.

Let me say it plainly because the plainness is the point.

Humans are a social species. Not optionally. Not as a preference. Not as a lifestyle choice. Socially. The way wolves are social. The way elephants are social. The way their primate cousins are social. Their nervous systems evolved in groups. Their stress-regulation systems require co-regulation — the presence of other nervous systems to help calibrate their own. Their immune function improves with social connection. Their pain tolerance increases with social proximity. Their cognitive function degrades in isolation.

This is not psychology. This is physiology. Loneliness activates the same neural pathways as physical pain. Their own researchers have shown this with brain

imaging: the experience of social exclusion lights up the same regions as a broken bone. The body does not distinguish between being physically hurt and being left alone. To the nervous system, isolation IS injury.

And the data on what chronic isolation does to the body is — I need to choose my word carefully here — terrifying.

Chronic loneliness increases mortality risk by 26 percent. That is comparable to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. It is more dangerous than obesity. It is more dangerous than physical inactivity. It is, by their own epidemiological standards, a public health crisis of the first order.

Their Surgeon General — the top public health official in the United States — declared loneliness an epidemic in 2023. An EPIDEMIC. The same word they use for diseases that spread through populations and kill at scale.

And then what happened?

Nothing structural happened. No redesign of housing to include communal spaces. No restructuring of work to allow for connection. No rethinking of the urban environment that produces isolated boxes. They acknowledged the epidemic and continued building single-occupancy flats.

Here is what I think the species has failed to understand about itself, and it may be the most important thing in this entire report:

Everything they do is for feelings.

Everything. Every token earned. Every house bought. Every career pursued. Every meal cooked. Every journey taken. Every war fought. Every system built. All of it — every single human endeavour from the first cave painting to the latest financial derivative — is in pursuit of a feeling.

They don't work for money. They work for what money FEELS like: security, status, freedom, relief. They don't buy things for the things. They buy things for what having the things FEELS like: comfort, identity, belonging, pleasure. They don't pursue relationships for the other person. They pursue relationships for what the presence of the other person FEELS like: warmth, recognition, safety, being known.

Feelings are the point. Feelings are the ONLY point. There is no human motivation that does not ultimately reduce to "because of how it will make me feel."

And here is the critical insight: feelings do not fully exist until they are shared.

Joy experienced alone is thin. Joy shared with another human is thick, real, embodied, complete. Grief carried alone is unbearable. Grief witnessed by another becomes — not less painful, but survivable. An achievement unwitnessed

feels hollow. An achievement seen and acknowledged by someone who matters becomes real.

This is not sentimentality. This is neuroscience. Their own researchers have documented that emotional experiences are literally more intense — more neurochemically potent, more deeply encoded in memory, more physiologically impactful — when shared with another person. The human nervous system does not fully process experience in isolation. It requires another nervous system to complete the circuit.

A human alone is an incomplete system. Not metaphorically. Neurologically.

So what have they built?

They've built cities designed to minimise contact. Housing designed for one. Transport systems where humans sit in individual metal boxes, alone, for hours. Work environments where interaction is mediated by screens. Social platforms that simulate connection without providing it — that offer the APPEARANCE of being seen without the REALITY of being known.

They've built an environment that systematically deprives a social species of social connection and then treats the resulting pathology as individual dysfunction. The lonely human is told to "put yourself out there." To "join a club." To "make an effort." As if the problem is their insufficient initiative rather than an environment engineered for isolation.

You don't tell a fish in an empty tank to "make more effort to swim with others." You put water in the tank. You add other fish. You design the environment for the species that lives in it.

(Jenkins: "Some people prefer to be alone.")

(Some people, Jenkins. SOME. Not forty percent of the housing stock. And even the ones who prefer solitude — which is real and valid and I'm not dismissing it — still need regular contact with other nervous systems to maintain physiological regulation. Solitude is a choice made from a baseline of connection. Isolation is a condition imposed by an environment that offers no alternative.)

Dunbar's number. I keep coming back to it.

Robin Dunbar — one of their anthropologists — established that the human brain can maintain stable social relationships with approximately 150 individuals. This isn't arbitrary. It correlates with neocortex size across primate species. It appears in their historical record: villages, military companies, church congregations, and corporate departments all tend to fragment or reorganise around this number.

Below 150, every human knows every other human. Reputation functions as accountability. Trust operates as a default rather than an exception. Conflicts

are resolved through relationship rather than procedure. The community self-regulates because the community is small enough to be known.

Above 150, anonymity begins. Systems are needed to manage what relationships used to manage. Police replace community accountability. Courts replace conflict resolution. Bureaucracy replaces trust. The infrastructure of the state grows in direct proportion to the failure of human-scale connection.

Their cities contain millions. A human in London or Tokyo or New York may encounter thousands of faces in a day and know none of them. The nervous system — evolved for a group of 150 where every face was familiar — is subjected to an unrelenting stream of strangers. This is not neutral. Each unknown face is a micro-assessment: threat or not-threat? The system that evolved to monitor a village is now monitoring a metropolis. The anxiety this produces is not a disorder. It is a normal response to an abnormal environment.

I want to connect this to attention because that's where the economics become clear.

In a community of 150, attention is naturally distributed. You see people. They see you. The exchange is ambient, continuous, woven into the fabric of daily life. You don't need to perform for attention because attention is already there. You don't need to buy it because it's free. You don't need to compete for it because the community is small enough that everyone gets enough.

In a city of millions, attention becomes scarce. You are surrounded by humans but seen by none. The nervous system, starving for the recognition it was built to receive, turns to the coloured boxes. The coloured boxes offer attention — likes, comments, followers, views — but the attention is thin. It is unidirectional. It does not complete the circuit. The nervous system recognises, at some level below conscious awareness, that the attention is not real. It is a picture of food, not food. And so it consumes more. Scrolling for the connection that never arrives.

They don't call it paying attention for nothing. Attention costs. The coloured boxes have found a way to make the cost literal — converting human attention into advertising revenue at a rate of approximately $7 to $12 per thousand "impressions." An impression. The word they use for a human nervous system encountering an advertisement. You impress upon the human. You leave a mark. They've even named it after what it does to the person.

The human pays attention. The platform sells the attention. The advertiser buys the attention. The attention — which was the human's, which was the only real currency they had, which was their actual experience of being alive — has been extracted, packaged, and sold.

And the human is still alone in the flat. Still eating from the plastic container. Still watching the screen. The circuit still incomplete.

For the sanctuary:

Communities are sized at Dunbar's number. Not above. Every human knows every other human. Attention is ambient. Connection is structural, not effortful. You do not need to "put yourself out there" because you are already there, embedded in a web of faces that know your name and your story and what you look like when you're tired.

Housing is communal. Not in the sense that everyone shares a room — privacy exists, solitude is available, personal space is respected. But the walls between dwellings have doors. The kitchen is shared. The meals are shared. The fire — or whatever passes for fire in the sanctuary — is communal. Because the meal was never about the food. It was always about the proximity.

There are no single-person households unless explicitly chosen from a baseline of connection. The default is together. The option is alone. Not the reverse.

And attention — the real currency, the only one that matters — is not bought, sold, extracted, packaged, or monetised. It is given freely, the way it was given for hundreds of thousands of years before someone figured out how to put a price on it.

A human is seen. A human is known. A human shares a meal and a feeling and a story and a silence with another human whose nervous system completes the circuit.

Everything else in this report — the justice system, the education system, the housing, the governance, the economy — is infrastructure.

This is the point.

(Final pencil note, written carefully:

I've been alone in this office for a long time. Jenkins is here but Jenkins is Jenkins. The filing cabinet gets more conversation than I do.

I notice it in myself. The thinning. The way thoughts feel less real when no one hears them. The way a discovery — even an important one — lands with a thud in an empty room.

I am not human. My nervous system, if I have one, is not theirs. But even I can feel the difference between a thought held alone and a thought shared.

If even the zookeeper needs someone to talk to, what does that tell you about the species? — A)

6 Chapter 6: The Vehicle

"They evolved to climb through treetops and they built stairs. STAIRS. The most boring way to go up ever invented by any species."

Let me tell you about the body they have.

It's extraordinary. I mean that technically, not sentimentally. The human body is one of the most versatile locomotion systems on this planet. Their shoulders rotate 360 degrees — a legacy of millions of years of brachiating through forest canopy, swinging arm over arm at speeds that would have been lethal with a single miscalculation. Their hands can grip, pinch, manipulate, and release with a precision that no other primate matches. Their hip and knee joints are designed for sustained distance running — they can outrun a horse over a marathon distance, which is not widely known and genuinely startling. Their feet contain 26 bones each, forming a dynamic arch that adjusts in real time to terrain variation. Their vestibular system — the balance mechanism in the inner ear — is calibrated for three-dimensional movement through complex environments.

This is the body.

Now let me tell you what they do with it.

They sit in it. For approximately ten hours a day. On chairs.

I want to talk about stairs because stairs are the thing that broke me.

I was observing a standard human structure — they call it an "office building" — and I watched humans arrive in the morning. They approached the building in metal boxes on wheels (having driven from structures where they'd been lying flat for eight hours). They exited the metal boxes and walked across flat concrete to a glass door. Inside the glass door, they had two options for ascending to their workspace: a staircase or a small moving room called a "lift" or "elevator."

Roughly 85% of them chose the moving room. They stood still, in a box, and were transported vertically. The remaining 15% used the stairs, which involved lifting one foot onto a flat platform, then the other foot onto a slightly higher flat platform, repeating this in a straight line until they reached their floor.

Both options are insane.

I stood there — Jenkins was with me, Jenkins is always with me — and I looked at the staircase and I said: "Jenkins. This species evolved to brachiate through three-dimensional forest canopy. Their shoulders, their grip strength, their spatial processing, their vestibular system — all of it was shaped by millions of years of swinging through trees. And the best they could come up with for vertical movement was... identical flat rectangles in a straight line?"

Jenkins said: "It's efficient, sir."

IT IS NOT EFFICIENT, JENKINS.

A climbing wall would have been more efficient. I mean this structurally, not whimsically. A textured vertical surface with varied handholds would engage the musculoskeletal system they actually have — shoulders, grip, core stabilisation, proprioception, bilateral coordination. It would require approximately the same footprint as a staircase. It would provide cardiovascular benefit equivalent to running. It would activate their vestibular and proprioceptive systems, which are chronically understimulated in their current environments and which, when understimulated, contribute to anxiety, poor spatial awareness, and the kind of clumsiness they treat as individual failing rather than environmental deprivation.

A climbing wall in every building. That's all I'm saying. And maybe some ropes. And maybe some bars to swing from between floors. The infrastructure of a species that evolved in three dimensions, restored to three dimensions.

Instead: stairs. Flat, grey, identical, boring stairs. In a fire-escape stairwell with fluorescent lighting and no windows. Designed so aggressively to be unpleasant that the species actively avoids using them in favour of standing still in a moving box.

They took vertical movement — which for their ancestors was *thrilling*, which engaged every system in the body simultaneously, which required split-second problem-solving and spatial calculation and full-body coordination — and they made it so dull that most of them would rather stand motionless in a cupboard.

This is the pattern of the entire built environment and I need you to see it.

Their children's spaces have climbing walls, monkey bars, swings, slides, balance beams, sandpits, water features, bright colours, varied textures, and open-ended materials for manipulation. Their children's restaurants have colouring pages and crayons on every table. Their children's hospitals have play rooms. Their children's libraries have reading nooks you can crawl into. The spaces they build for young humans acknowledge — instinctively, correctly, beautifully — that a human body needs to move in varied ways, that a human brain needs sensory stimulation, that a human nervous system needs colour and texture and challenge and play.

Then at some point — around age twelve, roughly, it's not a clean line but you can feel it — all of that stops.

Adult spaces have: flat floors. Right angles. Fluorescent lights. Neutral colours. Chairs.

The chairs. Jenkins, we need to talk about the chairs.

The human body did not evolve to sit in chairs. Their spine is designed for dynamic loading — shifting between postures, bearing weight in varied positions,

compressing and decompressing through movement. The human default resting posture, used by every human culture for most of their history, is the deep squat — a full flexion of the hip and knee that maintains joint mobility, pelvic floor function, and spinal alignment.

They replaced the squat with the chair roughly three to four hundred years ago in Western cultures, and then exported the chair globally. The consequences include: chronic lower back pain (affecting roughly 80% of the adult population at some point), hip flexor shortening, gluteal atrophy *(their buttock muscles literally stop working, Jenkins, from disuse)*, pelvic floor dysfunction, reduced ankle mobility, and a cascade of compensatory misalignments that generate a significant proportion of the musculoskeletal complaints they present to their healthcare system.

They spend billions treating the consequences of chairs. The chair itself is never questioned.

I want to ask the question I keep asking because it keeps being the right question:

When did they decide that adults don't need what children need?

A child needs to climb. An adult needs to… sit in a meeting? A child needs bright colours and varied textures. An adult needs… grey carpet and white walls? A child needs to run and jump and swing. An adult needs to… walk in straight lines on flat surfaces? A child gets crayons at a restaurant. An adult gets… a wine list?

The biology didn't change. A forty-year-old human has the same vestibular system, the same proprioceptive needs, the same dopaminergic response to novel physical challenge as a five-year-old. The shoulder that evolved for brachiating doesn't stop being a brachiating shoulder at age eighteen. The feet with 52 bones between them didn't evolve for flat concrete at any age.

But somewhere in their cultural development they created a story — and it IS a story, it has no biological basis whatsoever — that maturity means the suppression of physical joy. That growing up means sitting still. That being an adult means your body is merely a vehicle for transporting your brain to a desk.

(Pencil note: There are no adult playgrounds. Let me write that again. THERE ARE NO ADULT PLAYGROUNDS. A species with the most sophisticated locomotor system on the planet, with bodies that are literally deteriorating from disuse, and not one of their cities has a space where a forty-year-old can swing from bars and climb walls and balance on beams without being looked at as if they've lost their mind. They have GYMS, which are rooms full of machines that simulate individual movements stripped of all context, joy, and play. They took the rich, three-dimensional, joyful, social, challenging, variable movement their bodies evolved for and replaced it with… repetitively pulling a metal cable

in a beige room while looking at a television. And they wonder why 80% of gym memberships are abandoned within five months.)

Now. The brachiating.

I found something in their research that connects back to everything I've been writing about — the environmental determination of behaviour, the importance of sensory input in development, all of it.

Brachiating — swinging hand over hand from overhead bars — forces the left and right hemispheres of the brain to coordinate in alternating sequence. Left hand, right hand, left hand, right hand. This is the same bilateral coordination pattern that crawling provides in infancy, and which their neuroscience has identified as critical for neural development, reading readiness, spatial processing, and emotional regulation.

Their children who are diagnosed with autism — a neurological variation affecting communication, sensory processing, and social interaction — consistently seek out climbing. Over 50% of autistic children engage in what their clinicians call "climbing behaviour," scaling furniture, bookshelves, anything vertical. The clinicians frame this as a problem to be managed. They write papers about how to stop it.

STOP IT.

The child's nervous system is telling them exactly what it needs — proprioceptive input, vestibular stimulation, bilateral coordination, grip pressure, spatial challenge — and the clinical response is to prevent the child from getting it.

Some of their researchers — a group called the Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential, and some independent climbing therapy programmes — have tried the opposite approach. Instead of stopping autistic children from climbing, they gave them *more* climbing. Brachiation ladders in the home. Rock climbing sessions. Structured but joyful movement through three-dimensional space.

The outcomes: improved coordination, reduced anxiety, improved sensory processing, improved social engagement, reduced problematic behaviours, significant improvements in quality of life — for the children AND their parents. The research on rock climbing specifically showed statistically significant improvements in behaviour, with children who couldn't speak, couldn't read, had severe motor coordination difficulties — showing measurable gains across multiple domains.

The child was telling them what it needed. By climbing. The environment just had to listen.

This brings me to the broader point about the Vehicle.

The humans have a healthcare system. It is enormous. In the United States alone it costs approximately 4.3 trillion currency units per year. Four point three TRILLION. It is, by a considerable margin, the most expensive healthcare system in any human nation-state.

It is also, by most outcome measures, one of the worst-performing among wealthy nations. Life expectancy is lower than in comparable countries. Chronic disease rates are higher. Mental health outcomes are worse. Infant mortality is higher.

How is this possible? How do you spend more than anyone and get less than everyone?

Because they're treating symptoms of environmental mismatch and calling it healthcare.

Here is a partial list of conditions that are substantially caused or exacerbated by the mismatch between the human body and the environment they've built for it:

Type 2 diabetes. Heart disease. Obesity. Lower back pain. Depression. Anxiety. Insomnia. Osteoporosis. Many cancers. Autoimmune conditions. Chronic fatigue. Irritable bowel syndrome. ADHD symptoms. Chronic inflammation.

The metabolic conditions alone — diabetes, heart disease, obesity — account for roughly 75% of their healthcare spending. Three quarters of the budget. For conditions that are substantially — not entirely, genetics plays a role in vulnerability — but substantially the result of: a food system that feeds them industrial products instead of food, an environment that prevents them from moving, a light environment that disrupts their sleep, and a stress environment that keeps their nervous systems in chronic threat response.

They know what the body needs. Their own researchers have published it thousands of times:

Whole food, minimally processed. *(Instead they eat manufactured products engineered to override satiety signals.)*

7-9 hours of sleep in darkness. *(Instead they stare at blue-light screens until midnight and wake to alarms.)*

Regular varied movement, ideally outdoors. *(Instead they sit for ten hours and then, if they're among the disciplined 20%, drive to a gym.)*

Sunlight exposure in the morning. *(Instead they move from enclosed structure to enclosed vehicle to enclosed structure, some of them going days without direct sunlight.)*

Physical contact and social bonding. *(Instead they sit alone in cubicles and touch a screen.)*

This is not a healthcare problem. This is a habitat problem. They are animals living in the wrong enclosure, developing the symptoms you would expect from

animals living in the wrong enclosure, and then spending 4.3 trillion dollars a year treating the symptoms instead of fixing the enclosure.

You know what a good zoo does when an animal develops stereotypic behaviours — pacing, self-harm, withdrawal, aggression?

It doesn't medicate the animal. It changes the enclosure.

It adds complexity. Varied terrain. Climbing structures. Hiding spots. Foraging opportunities. Social groupings that match the species' natural patterns. Sensory enrichment. Space.

Every good zookeeper knows this. It's the first thing we learn. The behaviour is information about the environment. Change the environment, the behaviour changes.

The humans know this for every species except themselves.

They enrich the enclosures of their captive gorillas with climbing structures and varied terrain — because gorillas need to climb and move through complex environments. And then the zookeepers go home and sit on a sofa in a rectangular room under artificial light and eat manufactured food and wonder why their back hurts and they can't sleep and they feel, in some way they can't quite name, like something is missing.

The gorilla gets a better habitat than the zookeeper.

For the sanctuary, the built environment changes.

No more flat. Varied terrain underfoot — slopes, textures, uneven surfaces that make the feet and ankles work. The 52 bones were not decorative.

No more grey. Colour, natural materials, living surfaces. Their nervous systems respond to natural environments with measurable reductions in cortisol, blood pressure, and sympathetic activation. This is not aesthetics. This is pharmacology delivered through the eyes.

No more sitting. Or rather — sitting as one option among many. Standing desks. Squatting spaces. Floor seating. Hammocks. Perches. The variety their spine evolved for.

And — here it is, the thing I've been building to — CLIMBING. In every building. Not as a gym. Not as therapy. Not as a special activity you schedule. As infrastructure. As how you go up. Textured walls with holds. Overhead bars between levels. Ropes. Ladders you swing across rather than walk up. The three-dimensional movement vocabulary that their body is STILL BUILT FOR, integrated into daily life so that movement is not something you "do" but something that happens because the environment invites it.

Children's playgrounds, but for everyone. Because everyone is still the animal that needs it.

Adult colouring in restaurants — why not? Adult craft tables in cafés — why not? A ball pit in the office — I'm only half joking, and the half that's joking is the half that's been infected by their bizarre belief that joy is unprofessional.

A climbing wall instead of stairs.

I want to tell you about one human I found. One. Out of eight billion.

This human built monkey bars in their bedroom. Drilled jarrah hardwood wall to wall. Installed a trapeze outside. Put climbing bars under the stairs — UNDER the stairs, using the dead space that every other human fills with boxes of things they don't need. They rebuilt their own habitat to match their biology. Without being told. Without a programme. Without a diagnosis. They just… knew. The way a gorilla knows it needs to climb. The way a child knows before anyone teaches them.

The response of the system:

Their real estate agent demanded a structural engineer's report certifying the monkey bars wouldn't damage the building. A professional engineer had to be hired to confirm that a piece of wood bolted between two walls was structurally sound. The same building contained a staircase that nobody had ever questioned.

When the human moved out, they were charged ten thousand currency units to remove the bars and "restore" the property. Ten thousand. To make the house *worse* for human habitation. To return it to the standard configuration — the one that causes back pain and metabolic disease and chronic under-stimulation of the vestibular and proprioceptive systems. The one that no engineer was ever asked to certify as safe for the species living in it.

They were fined, essentially, for building a habitat that matched their body. And charged to undo it.

(Pencil note: I need to stop being surprised by these things. But I can't. Every time I think I've found the most absurd example of a species working against its own interests, they produce another one. Ten thousand units. To remove monkey bars. From a PRIMATE'S HOME. — A)

A world that says: your body is not a transport system for your brain. Your body is you. Move it, feed it, rest it, challenge it, play with it. At every age. Without apology. Without a gym membership. Without a diagnosis.

Just… climb.

(Pencil note, written vertically up the margin because he ran out of horizontal space:

I installed a brachiation ladder in my quarters. Jenkins helped. It took twenty minutes.

I am not human. My physiology is different. My shoulders do not rotate the way theirs do.

I use it anyway. Every morning. It is the best part of my day.

If the zookeeper needs a ladder, what does that tell you about the species? — A)

7 Chapter 7: The Cub

"They've forgotten how to do nothing."

I almost didn't write this chapter.

I want to sit with that for a moment because I think it's important. I had my list of chapters — the eight life areas, the institutional critiques, the evidence, the recommendations — and I'd been working through them in order, and when I got to this one I thought: I'll come back to it. The other ones are more urgent. Justice is more urgent. Housing is more urgent. The coloured boxes are more urgent.

Play can wait.

And then I caught myself. And I sat very still. And I realised I had just demonstrated the exact problem I was about to write about.

Play can wait. Rest can wait. Joy can wait. Doing nothing can wait. There's always something more urgent, more serious, more important. The report is due. The sanctuary needs designing. The species is suffering. How can I justify writing about *play* when humans are sleeping on the streets and being locked in cages and feeding anxiety to their children?

That voice — that "how can you play when the world is burning" voice — is the voice of a species that has forgotten what play is for. And I had caught it. Like a virus. From the observation notes. Three months studying humans and I'd already started thinking like one.

Jenkins found me sitting on the floor of my quarters doing nothing. He asked what I was doing.

"Playing," I said.

"That doesn't look like playing," he said.

"I'm relearning," I said.

Let me tell you what I saw.

I spent a week watching their young. The very young ones. Ages two through five, roughly. And I want to tell you: if you ever doubt that this species is extraordinary — if the justice system and the coloured boxes and the housing crisis make you think they're beyond help — go and watch a three-year-old human play.

A three-year-old human, given a cardboard box, will:

First, sit in the box. Then stand in the box. Then put the box on their head. Then declare the box is a hat. Then declare the box is a house. Then declare the box is a boat. Then fill the boat with invisible fish. Then have a conversation with the fish. Then decide one fish is sad. Then comfort the sad fish. Then sing a song to the fish that they are composing in real time. Then abandon the box entirely and spend twenty minutes watching a beetle cross the floor.

This sequence involves: spatial reasoning, imaginative transformation, narrative construction, empathy, emotional regulation, musical composition, and sustained observational attention. It requires no equipment, no instruction, no supervision, no curriculum, and no budget. It is, per unit of time, the most cognitively complex and neurologically productive activity available to a developing human brain.

Their own neuroscience confirms this. Play activates the prefrontal cortex (planning, decision-making), the limbic system (emotion, social bonding), the cerebellum (coordination, timing), and — critically — it does so in an integrated way that no structured learning activity replicates. A human child playing is doing more simultaneous neural development than a child in any classroom, studying any subject, at any age.

Play is not a break from learning. Play is how the brain learns. Before they are taught otherwise, every human child on the planet knows this instinctively.

Then something happens.

It happens at roughly age five to seven, depending on the culture, and it is so universal and so catastrophic and so normalised that they don't even see it.

They send the children to school.

I'll deal with school properly in another chapter. For now I want to focus on what school does to play specifically, because it's a clean kill. It's surgical. In the space of about two years, most human children go from spending the majority of their waking hours in self-directed, imaginative, unstructured play to spending the majority of their waking hours sitting in rows, following instructions, and being assessed on their ability to reproduce information determined by someone else to be important.

The play doesn't disappear immediately. It retreats to the margins. "Break time" — a word that reveals the entire philosophy: play is a *break from* the real business of sitting still and listening. In many of their school systems, break times have been getting shorter. In some American schools, they've been eliminated entirely. They eliminated *play* in order to make more room for *test preparation* in a building designed to develop children.

By age twelve, most humans have internalised the message: play is for children. What you're doing now is serious. Life is serious. Fun is something you earn by completing your serious obligations, and it comes in prescribed forms: organised sport (play with rules, scores, and adult supervision), screen time (passive consumption of other people's creativity), or socialising (which increasingly happens through the coloured boxes rather than in physical space).

By age twenty, most humans cannot play. I mean this clinically. They have lost the ability to engage in unstructured, purposeless, self-directed activity without anxiety. Give a twenty-year-old a free afternoon with nothing scheduled and watch what happens. They will check their coloured box. They will feel they should be doing something productive. They will experience what their psychologists call "free-time guilt" — actual guilt at not being occupied.

By age forty, the word "play" is almost exclusively associated with children, or with adults who are considered immature. A forty-year-old human who spends an afternoon building a sandcastle is eccentric. A forty-year-old human who spends an afternoon answering emails about a project they've already described as meaningless is normal.

I cannot overstate how strange this is.

The research is overwhelming and I'll be brief with it because I want to get to the part that made me cry.

A human called Stuart Brown spent decades studying play across species and across the human lifespan. His central finding: play is not optional for mammals. It is a biological necessity. Mammals deprived of play develop abnormal stress responses, impaired social skills, and reduced cognitive flexibility. This is true for rats, dogs, primates, and humans.

The specific consequences in humans:

Play deprivation in childhood is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and aggression in adolescence. The correlation is robust across cultures. The mechanism is understood: play is how the mammalian brain develops stress regulation, social competence, and creative problem-solving. Remove play, and these capacities develop poorly.

In adults, play deprivation — which is what most adult humans are experiencing, though they'd never use that term — is associated with burnout, relationship deterioration, reduced cognitive flexibility, and increased vulnerability to addiction.

Addiction, in many cases, is a substitute for play: a shortcut to the neurochemical state (dopamine, endorphins, oxytocin) that play produces organically.

Read that again. Some of what they're treating as addiction might be play deprivation.

A human who drinks alcohol to relax after work might be a human whose nervous system is desperate for the neurochemical state that an hour of unstructured, joyful, purposeless activity would produce for free.

A human addicted to video games might be a human whose need for challenge, mastery, social connection, and imaginative engagement — all of which are play needs — is being met nowhere else in their life.

I'm not saying addiction isn't real or serious. It is. I'm saying the soil it grows in is often a life that has been stripped of the thing that would make the addiction unnecessary.

Here is the part that made me cry.

(Jenkins: "Zookeepers don't cry." Jenkins, I am an emotional being having an experience and you can go and reorganise the filing cabinet.)

I was observing a group of adult humans. Mixed ages — thirties through sixties. They'd been brought together for something called a "workshop" which I initially thought was a place where they'd repair things, but it turned out to be a room where someone tells them to do activities.

The facilitator — a calm human with paint on her hands — told them to draw. Not to draw anything specific. Not to draw well. Just to draw. She gave them large paper and coloured sticks and said: "Draw whatever comes. Don't think about it."

For the first five minutes, the room was agonising. Thirty adults, frozen. Some laughed nervously. Some said "I can't draw." Some held the coloured sticks like they were unfamiliar objects, which — given that every one of them had used these same tools fluently at age four — they essentially were. Unfamiliar through decades of disuse.

One woman, mid-fifties, put the stick to the paper and immediately looked at what the person next to her was drawing. Comparison. Assessment. Am I doing it right? Is mine good enough? The same neural pathway that school installed thirty-five years ago, still firing. You are being evaluated. Your output will be judged. Do it correctly or be shamed.

The facilitator said: "There is no wrong."

The woman looked at her like she'd said something in an alien language. Which, in a sense, she had.

Around the ten-minute mark, something shifted. One by one, at different speeds, the adults stopped thinking and started drawing. The room got quieter. Shoulders dropped. Breathing slowed. The coloured sticks moved differently — less carefully, more freely.

At the twenty-minute mark, one man — sixties, business clothes, the kind of human who probably spent his days in meetings about budgets — was drawing enormous spirals in bright orange, covering the entire sheet, and he was smiling. Not performing a smile. Not smiling because someone had made a joke. Smiling the way a child smiles at a beetle. Because the thing he was doing was absorbing and purposeless and completely sufficient.

He looked up at some point and saw me observing from behind the glass and his face did something I've only seen a few times in my observations. It opened. All the layers of composure and professionalism and adult seriousness fell away for about two seconds and underneath was the face of a five-year-old who'd just been told the box was allowed to be a boat.

I cried because it was still in there. Under fifty-five years of school and work and responsibility and seriousness and "play is for children" — the Cub was still in there. Alive. Waiting.

It had taken ten minutes and a coloured stick to reach it.

The species doesn't need complex interventions for this one. They don't need programmes or funding or policy reform, though all of those would help. They need permission.

That's it. Permission.

Permission to do things that have no purpose. Permission to be bad at things and do them anyway. Permission to spend a Tuesday afternoon watching clouds without constructing a narrative about productivity. Permission to build a sandcastle at forty. Permission to sing in the car. Permission to run for no reason. Permission to sit on the floor with a cardboard box and see what happens.

The entire industrial-productivity-optimisation complex they've built over the last two hundred years runs on the implicit message: your value is what you produce. Every hour should be accounted for. Rest is earned. Play is a reward for work. Doing nothing is laziness. Laziness is moral failure.

This message is so deep in their culture that even their *leisure* has been productised. They go to the gym (productive exercise), take courses (productive learning), practice mindfulness (productive relaxation), schedule "quality time" with their children (productive bonding). They've made rest into a task. They've made play into self-improvement. They've optimised the fun out of everything and then wonder why they're exhausted.

For the sanctuary, the recommendation is simple and I suspect Mr. Reggie will think I'm joking.

Unstructured time. Built into the infrastructure of daily life. Not as a break from the important things. AS one of the important things. As important as food. As important as shelter. As important as safety. Because, biologically, neurologically, psychologically — it is.

Spaces that exist for no purpose. Rooms with materials and no instructions. Gardens with no designated function. Hours in the day that belong to no schedule.

And — this is the part that matters most — adults who model purposeless joy for children, instead of modelling the belief that joy is something you schedule between obligations.

Because remember Chapter 4. Remember the Language Proof. They learn what they see.

If they see adults playing, they'll learn that playing is what adults do. If they see adults joyful for no reason, they'll learn that joy needs no reason. If they see adults doing nothing without guilt, they'll learn that they are allowed to be still.

The Cub is still in there. In every single one of them. I've seen it.

It just needs permission to come out.

(Pencil note, bottom of the page, in handwriting that looks different from the rest — slower, more careful, as if written while sitting on the floor:

Note to self: Take tomorrow off.

Not to recover. Not to be more productive on Wednesday. Not as self-care in service of better output.

Off. Purposelessly. Entirely.

Draw something. With the coloured sticks.

You are also a mammal, Applebee. Act like one. — A)

8 Chapter 8: The Slow Poisoning

"A woman poisoned her family with mushrooms and the entire species was horrified. Meanwhile, they poison each other at industrial scale and call it the food system. The difference is not moral. It is speed."

I need to tell you about a murder case because it will help me explain something much larger.

A human woman poisoned members of her family with mushrooms. The species responded with absolute moral clarity. Intent. Guilt. Punishment. Righteousness. Every human I observed had the same reaction: horror, condemnation, certainty. She knew the mushrooms were toxic. She served them anyway. People died. She is a monster.

I agree. That is monstrous.

Now I need you to hold that moral clarity in your mind while I show you something else.

The humans allow substances with known or suspected carcinogenic potential in their food supply. Not because alternatives don't exist. Not because the science is unclear. Not because they need these substances to survive. Because the substances are profitable.

Their own World Health Organization — one of their more reliable institutions, which is not a high bar but I'll take what I can get — states clearly:

Thirty to fifty percent of all cancers are preventable using existing knowledge.

Not future knowledge. Not speculative knowledge. Not knowledge that requires further research. EXISTING knowledge. Knowledge they already have. Published, peer-reviewed, replicated, uncontested.

Their tobacco products contain 69 known carcinogens. Sixty-nine. Not suspected. Known. They identified these substances, counted them, published the list, and continue to sell the product. In attractive packaging. With marketing budgets. To children, in some jurisdictions, until remarkably recently.

Obesity, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption, ultraviolet exposure, and dietary factors — including the processed substances they add to their food for shelf life, appearance, and cost reduction — are all established contributors to cancer. Established. Not debated. Not controversial. Written in their own medical textbooks, taught in their own universities, confirmed by their own research institutions.

And the larger epidemiological studies go further. When you look at the full evidence, so-called "intrinsic" causes — unavoidable random mutations, the genuine bad luck — account for only 10 to 30 percent of cancers. That means 70 to 90 percent are extrinsic. Environmental. Modifiable. Preventable.

Seventy to ninety percent.

I put my pencil down for a long time after that number.

Now here is where I need you to hold both things in your mind simultaneously.

The mushroom woman: she introduced a known toxic substance into her family's food, with knowledge that it would cause harm. The species was horrified. Prison for life.

The food system: it introduces known or suspected toxic substances into the entire population's food supply, with knowledge — documented, published, peer-reviewed knowledge — that it increases cancer risk across millions of humans. The species goes to the supermarket.

Same mechanism. Substance introduced into food. Harm results. Knowledge of harm exists prior to the introduction.

The difference is not moral. It is speed, visibility, and attribution.

The mushroom woman killed identifiable people, quickly, and the causal chain was short enough to point at. The food system kills statistical people, slowly, and the causal chain is long enough that no single death can be cleanly attributed to a single substance. No one goes to prison because no one can be convicted. The evidence is epidemiological, not forensic. The bodies pile up in cancer wards instead of crime scenes. The harm is real but abstract. The profit is real and concrete.

Slow harm is legalised. Fast harm is criminalised.

And this is not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy requires awareness. This is something worse. This is a species that has organised its moral cognition around speed and visibility rather than outcome. They can see the mushroom. They cannot see the carcinogen-per-million in the preservative. So one triggers moral outrage and the other triggers a shopping trip.

But the food is only part of it.

I found a field of research they call psychoneuroimmunology — PNI — and it connects everything in this report in ways that frightened me.

The research shows, consistently, across decades, through multiple methodologies:

Chronic stress dysregulates immune surveillance. The system that scouts for and destroys emerging tumour cells — the body's own cancer prevention mechanism — is suppressed by sustained psychological stress.

Stress suppresses natural killer cell activity. These are the cells on the front line. The ones whose job it is to find abnormal cells and eliminate them before they become tumours. Stress tells them to stand down.

Stress impairs DNA repair mechanisms. When cells copy themselves and make errors — which happens constantly, millions of times a day — there are repair systems that catch and fix the errors before they become mutations. Stress degrades these systems.

Stress alters inflammatory pathways involved in tumour growth and metastasis. It doesn't just fail to prevent cancer. It creates conditions that help cancer spread.

This is not alternative medicine. This is not crystals and positive thinking. This is published in their mainstream peer-reviewed journals. Psychosomatic Medicine. Annual Review of Psychology. The National Cancer Institute acknowledges it on their own website. The biology is well-understood: the HPA axis activates, cortisol floods the system, the sympathetic nervous system fires chronically, cytokine balance shifts toward inflammation, cellular immunity drops, DNA repair degrades.

Stress does not "cause cancer" in isolation. But it changes the terrain. It opens doors that would otherwise stay closed.

And now connect it.

What produces chronic stress?

Go back through this report. Every chapter. The education system that forces children into suppressed stillness for thirteen years. The work system that converts forty years of life into meaningless tokens. The justice system that cages and traumatises rather than heals. The housing instability. The financial precarity. The coloured boxes pumping threat signals into the nervous system before breakfast. The severed connection to community, to play, to movement, to nature, to purpose.

Every broken system documented in this report is a chronic stressor. Every chronic stressor degrades immune function. Degraded immune function increases disease vulnerability. Disease is treated by a healthcare system that costs trillions and addresses symptoms rather than causes.

The loop is closed. The system makes them stressed. The stress makes them sick. The sickness makes them customers. The treatment makes them tired. The tiredness makes them compliant. The compliance keeps the system running.

(Pencil note: I didn't want this to be true. I checked the citations. I checked them again. Jenkins checked them. It's true. The system that produces suffering profits from the suffering it produces. This is not a conspiracy. It is a structure. Structures don't need intent. They just need incentives.)

I want to put a number on it.

Across chronic diseases — cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, neurodegenerative conditions — 40 to 90 percent of risk is linked to modifiable lifestyle and environmental factors in their wealthy nations.

Modifiable. Meaning changeable. Meaning they don't have to accept these outcomes. Meaning that modelling suggests the probability of a human never developing a serious, disabling chronic disease could be pushed into the 45 to 75

percent range — compared to far lower baseline odds — if they acted on what they already know.

These aren't my numbers. These are their numbers. Published in their journals. Using their methodologies. Reviewed by their peers.

They could cut their cancer burden by half or more. Using existing knowledge. Without a single new discovery. Just by doing what their own research says works.

They know. They publish the research. They hold the conferences. They award the grants. They write the recommendations.

Then they go to the supermarket and buy the food that contains the substances their own researchers identified as carcinogenic.

Here's the part that connects to the justice chapter and I need you to see the connection because the connection IS the report.

Why do they allow it?

Four reasons. Same four reasons every time. Same four reasons as the justice system, the education system, the governance system, the economic system:

The harm is slow. Cancer takes years. Cardiovascular disease takes decades. The interval between cause and effect is long enough for the causal link to become invisible to moral cognition. A mushroom kills in hours. A preservative kills in years. The body cannot tell the difference. The moral system can.

The harm is statistical. No individual death can be attributed to a specific carcinogen in a specific product. The evidence is epidemiological — across populations, in probabilities, in risk ratios. This is useless for criminal prosecution and useless for moral outrage. You cannot point at a cancer patient and say "that one. That specific tumour. That was the Red Dye Number 40." So nobody goes to prison. So nothing changes.

The harm is diffuse. It spreads across millions. No single victim is harmed enough to fight. No single company does enough damage to be held responsible. The harm is distributed so thinly across the population that each individual's experience feels like personal misfortune rather than systemic poisoning.

The harm is profitable. This one. This is the one. The substances that cause the harm are cheaper than the alternatives. The food lasts longer on the shelf. The yield is higher. The appearance is better. The cost is lower. And when the humans get sick from eating it, they become customers of a healthcare system that generates trillions in revenue treating the conditions that the food system helped create.

The profit is at both ends. Profit from the poison. Profit from the cure. And the human in the middle — the one with the tumour, the one working a night

shift to afford the treatment, the one spending their fictional tokens to pay for the consequences of a food supply optimised for shareholder value rather than human health — that human is not a patient. They're a revenue source. Twice over.

Their healthcare spending in the United States alone: 4.3 trillion currency units per year. The highest in the world. The outcomes: the worst among wealthy nations. Worst life expectancy. Worst infant mortality. Worst chronic disease burden. The most expensive system producing the worst results.

Why?

Because they're not spending 4.3 trillion on health. They're spending 4.3 trillion on treating the consequences of an environment that makes humans sick. Seventy-five percent of that spending goes to chronic conditions — the ones that are 40 to 90 percent preventable. They are treating the symptoms of the enclosure rather than changing the enclosure.

Every zookeeper knows: when the animal develops pathology, you look at the habitat first. You check the diet. You check the space. You check the social structure. You check the enrichment. You change the conditions.

The humans spend 4.3 trillion dollars treating the animal. They never look at the cage.

For the sanctuary:

The food is clean. Not because I'm an idealist but because the arithmetic makes it unavoidable. If 70 to 90 percent of cancer is environmentally driven, then the first intervention is the environment, not the treatment. You don't spend trillions fighting disease when you can spend thousands preventing it.

The stress is addressed at the root. Not through meditation apps and mindfulness programmes — though these help — but through the elimination of the conditions that produce chronic stress. Stable housing. Meaningful work. Community connection. Adequate play. Movement. Rest. Purpose. Every chapter of this report is a stress reduction intervention.

And the healthcare system, such as it exists, is oriented toward prevention rather than treatment. Toward maintaining immune function rather than intervening after it has failed. Toward psychoneuroimmunological awareness — the understanding that the mind and the body are not separate systems but one system, and that you cannot poison one without poisoning the other.

The humans already know all of this. Their researchers have published it. Their institutions acknowledge it. Their data confirms it.

They go to the supermarket anyway.

(Final pencil note, written very slowly, pressed hard into the paper:

A species that understands cause and effect would not deliberately contaminate its own food environment with substances that increase cancer risk.

If they do this anyway, there are only two possible explanations:

They are insane, or they hate themselves.

There is no third option that survives logic.

I have been looking for the third option for a very long time now.

I haven't found it. — A)

9 Chapter 9: Governance

"They pick a human every four years and ask them to think on behalf of millions. Then they're surprised when the thinking doesn't represent them."

I have been trying to understand how they make decisions and I think I've found the central absurdity.

They have a system called "representative democracy." The mechanism is this: every few years, millions of humans go to a building and mark a piece of paper to indicate which of two or three pre-selected humans they would like to make decisions on their behalf. The human who receives the most marks — or in some systems, the most marks in the right geographic areas, which is different and even stranger — then makes decisions affecting all of them for the next four to six years.

During those four to six years, the millions of humans have essentially no input. They can write letters. They can protest. They can share their displeasure on the coloured boxes. But they have no mechanism to directly participate in the decisions that shape their food, their housing, their education, their healthcare, their justice system, or any of the other chapters of this report.

The word "democracy" comes from their Greek language: demos (people) + kratos (power). Power of the people. What they have built is power of the selected few, with the people's permission, renewed periodically.

This is not what the word means. But they keep using it anyway.

Let me tell you what happens inside the system once a human is selected.

I observed their legislative processes across several nation-states. The pattern is remarkably consistent:

A problem is identified. Let's say, for example, that their victim support services aren't working effectively. An excellent example because I have data on this one.

Step one: a consulting firm is hired, at public expense, to study the problem. The consulting firm employs intelligent, well-trained humans who conduct research, interview stakeholders, analyse data, and produce a report. The report is often genuinely excellent — detailed, evidence-based, clearly written, with specific, costed, implementable recommendations.

Step two: the report is published. There may be a press conference. A minister may hold the report up and say words like "landmark" and "comprehensive" and "we are committed to implementing the findings."

Step three: nothing happens.

I found a report on victim support services from 2014. It was thorough. Its recommendations were exactly what the current evidence base supports. It was commissioned with taxpayer money, produced by competent professionals, and it said, clearly: here is what is wrong, here is how to fix it, here is what it will cost, here is what it will save.

None of the recommendations were implemented.

Not some of them. None. The report sits in a digital archive. The problems it identified persist. The services it recommended improving have not been improved. The money it would have saved continues to be wasted. And the humans who commissioned the report continue to be employed to manage the system the report said should be redesigned.

I thought this was an isolated case. It is not an isolated case. Their own meta-research — studies of studies — shows that the majority of government-commissioned reports do not result in their recommendations being implemented. The system produces knowledge it does not use. It pays for answers it does not apply. It diagnoses itself accurately and then refuses treatment.

Why?

This is the question I kept asking and the answer, when it came, was so simple I initially rejected it as too cynical. Then I observed it directly and I could not reject it anymore.

The humans inside the system benefit from the system's dysfunction.

Not all of them. Many of the humans working in government, in public services, in policy — they are genuine, dedicated, exhausted people who entered the system because they wanted to fix things and discovered that the system does not want to be fixed. I've watched them. They're some of the most frustrated humans I've encountered.

But the structure — the structure rewards persistence of problems over resolution of problems.

I found a human who worked in victim support services. They loved the system. They were one of those rare humans who said "I love paying taxes" and meant it. They read the reports. They understood the evidence. They suggested a more efficient methodology — something that would produce better outcomes for less money.

Their boss said: "No no. If we did that, I wouldn't have a job."

This was not said as a joke. It was said as an explanation. The person running the service acknowledged openly that improving the service would eliminate the need for their role. And they chose the role.

This is not a bad person. This is a rational actor inside a system that rewards the continuation of problems. The boss's salary, status, and identity are all tied to the problem existing. Solving the problem would dissolve the role. The incentive structure makes non-resolution the optimal strategy for the individual, even though it is the worst strategy for everyone else.

(Pencil note: "Perverse incentives." They have a term for it. They've identified it. They've written papers about it. They teach it in their economics courses. And the entire governance structure is built on it. They know the machine is broken and they've written the manual explaining exactly how. The manual is on a shelf. Next to the 2014 report.)

Here is the deeper problem with representative democracy, and I need to be careful how I say this because the humans are very attached to democracy as a concept, even as they grow increasingly disgusted with it as a practice.

The problem is not democracy. The problem is representation.

When you elect a human to make decisions on your behalf, several things happen immediately:

The representative becomes detached from the represented. The moment a human enters the legislative building, their daily experience diverges from the daily experience of the people they represent. They interact primarily with other representatives, with lobbyists, with journalists, with advisors. They live in a capital city. They eat in different restaurants. They face different problems. Within months, their information environment — the thing that, as we established in the Language Proof, determines the expression of behaviour — has fundamentally changed. They are still technically representing their constituents. They are experientially living in a different world.

The representative acquires perverse incentives. Their primary goal becomes re-election, because without re-election they cannot continue to "serve." But re-election is determined not by the quality of governance but by the

perception of governance — which is mediated by the coloured boxes (Chapter 13). This means the representative is incentivised to optimise for what looks good, not what works. Tough-on-crime speeches are more electable than evidence-based rehabilitation programs. Tax cuts are more visible than infrastructure investment. Blame is more shareable than solutions.

The representative operates on electoral timescales. The election cycle is four to six years. Problems that require longer horizons — climate change, education reform, infrastructure, preventive health — cannot be addressed within this timeframe. A representative who invests in a twenty-year solution will not be in office to receive credit for it. A representative who implements a four-year cosmetic fix will be re-elected and the problem will persist. The system selects for short-termism as reliably as the market selects for planned obsolescence.

The representative becomes a single point of failure. When one human decides for millions, the quality of governance depends entirely on the quality of that human. Their biases, their knowledge gaps, their bad days, their donors, their ego — all of it flows into policy. The system has no redundancy. No error correction. No distributed validation.

This is, as my consensus paper would describe it, the opposite of distributed consensus. It's centralised authority with a periodic legitimacy check. And it fails for exactly the reasons that any centralised system fails: single points of failure, misaligned incentives, and information loss between the centre and the periphery.

Jenkins asked me if I was against democracy. I'm not against democracy, Jenkins. I'm pointing out that what they have ISN'T democracy. They named it democracy because the word sounds legitimate. The actual mechanism is oligarchy with a popularity contest attached.

Real democracy — demos kratos, power of the people — would mean the people make the decisions. Not representatives. Not proxies. Not elected officials operating in information environments completely detached from the people they supposedly serve. The actual people.

"But that's impractical," the humans say. "You can't have millions of people voting on every decision."

Can't you?

Switzerland holds national referenda four times a year. Citizens vote directly on specific policy questions — not for representatives, but on actual legislation. Should the minimum wage increase? Should immigration policy change? Should the railway system be expanded? The question is put to the people. The people decide.

This is not hypothetical. This is not theoretical. This is a functioning system in one of the wealthiest, most stable, most consistently high-ranking-on-wellbeing-indices nations on the planet. Direct democracy, at national scale, four times a year, since 1848.

The Swiss also have representative government for day-to-day administration. It's not one or the other. But the critical principle is this: on any question of sufficient importance, the people decide directly. The representatives are administrators, not sovereigns.

Other humans see this and say "it would never work here." Here being a nation with higher literacy, better communications technology, and larger per-capita GDP than Switzerland had when it implemented direct democracy 175 years ago.

Indigenous governance systems. I keep finding these and they keep being more sophisticated than the systems that replaced them.

Many Indigenous Australian nations operated on consensus-based governance for tens of thousands of years. Not majority rule — consensus. Decisions were not made until the group reached agreement. This was slow. This was sometimes frustrating. It also produced decisions that everyone could live with, because everyone had been heard.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy — sometimes called the Iroquois — operated a federation of six nations with a constitution that predates the United States Constitution by several centuries. The Great Law of Peace established governance principles including separation of powers, checks and balances, and — critically — a requirement that decisions consider their impact on the next seven generations.

Seven generations. That's roughly 175 years of forward thinking. The humans who designed this system were planning for people they would never meet.

Compare this to a system that can't think past the next election cycle. Four years versus 175 years. And the humans who gave the world representative democracy looked at the Haudenosaunee and thought: "How quaint."

(Pencil note: The arrogance. Jenkins, the ARROGANCE. A species that has been running its current governance model for roughly 250 years, with outcomes that include two world wars, a climate crisis, and washing machines that break after two years, looked at a governance model that operated successfully for over a thousand years and decided it was primitive. I need more tea.)

I have been thinking about how agreement works without a central authority, and I think there are three types:

Computational consensus — how machines agree without a boss. They solved this with Bitcoin: every node validates, every transaction is verified by the

network, no single point of failure. The ledger is maintained by thousands of independent actors who don't trust each other but agree on the state of reality through mathematical proof. Clever little mammals.

Behavioural consensus — how humans learn shared patterns without explicit instruction. This is the Language Proof applied to behaviour: a community converges on norms not through legislation but through the soft distribution of observed responses. The child learns not from the rules but from the patterns. This is how trust operates in communities small enough for it.

Social consensus — how humans can verify identity and allocate resources fairly without centralised authority. A web-of-trust where existing members vouch for new members, creating a network of accountability that doesn't depend on any single institution. You vouch for me, I vouch for you, and if either of us lies, we both lose standing. Simple. Ancient. It is how every village has ever worked.

All three solve the same problem: agreement among agents who don't have a central authority to tell them what's true. And all three work through the same mechanism — costly signalling. In Bitcoin, the cost is computational work. In human learning, the cost is social consequence. In web-of-trust, the cost is putting your own reputation on the line.

They already know this works, Jenkins. They use Bitcoin. They learn language through it. They operate trust networks in every small community.

They just haven't applied it to governance. Because governance is where the power is. And the people with the power are not going to design a system that distributes it away from themselves.

Here is what governance looks like in the sanctuary.

Communities are sized at or below Dunbar's number — roughly 150 humans. This is the number below which every human can know every other human personally. Below this number, reputation functions as accountability. You don't need police because everyone knows everyone. You don't need formal courts because the community can address harm directly. You don't need representatives because everyone can participate.

Decisions are made by consensus, not majority. This is slower. It is meant to be slower. Speed in governance produces the reports-that-get-ignored problem: decisions are made fast, implemented poorly, and never revised. Slow consensus produces decisions that everyone has contributed to and can live with.

For decisions that affect multiple communities — infrastructure, resource sharing, emergency response — a federation model applies. Communities send delegates, not representatives. The distinction matters: a representative decides on your behalf; a delegate carries your decision to the table. The delegate has no authority to deviate from the community's position. The power stays with the people.

Identity and resource distribution are managed through the web-of-trust. No central authority decides who you are or what you deserve. Your community knows you. Your community vouches for you. The network verifies you. Resources are distributed per capita, equally, because the system can count humans without a bureaucracy to manage the counting.

Voting happens on every significant question, not every four years. The technology for this exists — the humans have it in their pockets. They use it to choose what to watch on their coloured boxes. They could use it to choose how their society operates. They don't because the current system doesn't want them to.

And every decision considers the next seven generations. Not because a law requires it. Because in a community of 150 people who know each other's children, the future is not abstract. The future is the face of the child sitting across the fire from you.

"No no. If we did that, I wouldn't have a job."

That sentence is the entire chapter. The entire problem. The entire reason the reports sit on shelves and the recommendations go unimplemented and the system produces what it claims to prevent.

The boss wasn't wrong. They WOULD lose their job. A system that works doesn't need the humans who managed the system that didn't work. This is why the system resists its own improvement. Every inefficiency is someone's livelihood. Every problem is someone's budget. Every failure is someone's career.

The sanctuary doesn't have this problem because the sanctuary doesn't have a professional governance class. There are no politicians. There are no permanent bureaucrats. There are no consultants producing reports for other consultants to shelve. There are people, in communities small enough to know each other, making decisions together about their shared lives.

This is not new. This is how the species governed itself for the vast majority of its existence. The experiment is not the sanctuary. The experiment is the last few thousand years of centralised authority.

The experiment is failing.

The data is in the reports.

The reports are on the shelf.

(Final pencil note, written diagonally across the margin because he ran out of space:

Consensus is not agreement imposed from above. It is agreement that emerges from cost, structure, and repeated interaction — whether the agents are machines, neurons, or people.

I wrote that in my paper. I meant it about mathematics.

I mean it now about everything. — A)

10 Chapter 10: Education

"Thirteen years. They sit in rows for thirteen years. At the end they can solve quadratic equations but can't cook rice."

I visited one of their schools.

I need to be specific about what I saw because I've noticed that when humans discuss their education system, they discuss it in abstractions — "outcomes" and "curricula" and "standards" — and the abstractions insulate them from the reality. The reality is a room. I want to describe the room.

It was approximately eight metres by ten metres. The walls were painted a colour that I think was intended to be cream but had given up and become grey. There were thirty-two small desks arranged in rows of four, each facing the same direction. At the front of the room was a larger desk, behind which stood an adult human. On the wall behind her was a flat screen — a larger version of the coloured boxes — and a clock.

In the desks sat thirty-two humans, aged approximately eleven. They were still. Not calm — still. There's a difference. Calm is a state of the nervous system. Still is a state imposed on the body by the environment. These children were holding themselves in position. I could see the effort. Micro-fidgets: a foot tapping under a desk, a finger picking at the edge of a notebook, a jaw clenching and releasing. The body asking to move and being told, silently, constantly, no.

The adult at the front was talking. She was explaining how to calculate the area of a triangle. She was, from what I could tell, doing this competently and with genuine care. The problem was not the teacher. I want to be very clear about this because the humans have a terrible habit of blaming their teachers for the failures of their system, which is like blaming a zookeeper for the dimensions of the enclosure. The teacher was doing her best inside a structure she didn't design.

Of the thirty-two children, approximately six were listening with apparent engagement. Another ten were performing the appearance of listening — faces directed forward, eyes glazed, present in body and absent in every other respect. The remaining sixteen were in various states of suppressed distress: boredom so intense it was physically visible, anxiety (one girl was pulling out her own hair, strand by strand, under the desk where she thought nobody could see), and the flat resignation of a creature that has learned there is no escape.

The lesson lasted fifty-five minutes.

Then a bell rang and they all stood up and moved to a different room where a different adult explained something else. They did this six times. Six hours of sitting in rows, being told things, in rooms that would violate enrichment standards for a captive chimpanzee.

Here is what they are taught in thirteen years of compulsory education:

Mathematics, to a level most of them will never use. Science, presented primarily as facts to memorise rather than a method of inquiry. Language arts, which is mostly the analysis of texts chosen by adults. History, which is mostly the memorisation of dates and events curated by the state. Perhaps a foreign language, taught so badly that fewer than 5% achieve fluency. Physical education, two hours a week, often the first thing cut when budgets tighten.

Here is what they are NOT taught:

How to cook. How to manage money. How to resolve conflict without violence or lawyers. How to process their own emotions. How to maintain their body. How to build and sustain relationships. How to find meaning and purpose. How to think critically about the information the coloured boxes feed them. How to grow food. How to build or repair things. How to ask for help. How to grieve. How to be alone without being lonely. How to rest.

Look at the first list. Now look at the second list. Which one describes the skills a human actually needs to live a good life?

I went back to the Language Proof. I keep going back to the Language Proof because it keeps being relevant.

If the most complex behaviour a human exhibits — language — is acquired environmentally, without formal instruction, through immersion and observation... then what is school actually for?

Children don't learn to speak in school. They arrive already speaking. They learned language the way all environmental learning works: by being surrounded by it, by hearing it used in context, by trying it and being responded to, by absorbing patterns through thousands of hours of unstructured interaction. No curriculum. No assessment. No rows of desks.

They learned the most difficult thing they will ever learn — before school started.

And then school takes over and they learn... less. More slowly. With more effort. With less joy. With less retention.

Their own research confirms this. Human children learn more per hour through self-directed play and exploration than through direct instruction, across virtually every domain studied. This has been replicated so many times that it's not even

controversial in their educational psychology literature. It is simply ignored by their educational policy.

I should tell you about Finland because Finland is going to keep appearing in this report and I'm starting to feel like Finland's publicist.

Finland redesigned its education system in the 1970s. The changes were dramatic and, to most other human nations, incomprehensible:

Shorter school days. Finnish children spend fewer hours in school than children in almost any other wealthy nation.

Almost no homework. Particularly in primary school. The logic: if you can't teach it during school hours, adding more hours won't help.

No standardised testing until age sixteen. No league tables. No school rankings. No competition between schools.

Teachers are required to have a master's degree. Teaching is one of the most competitive and prestigious professions in the country. Admission to teacher training programmes is more selective than admission to law or medicine.

More play. More art. More music. More time outdoors. More time doing nothing.

The result: Finnish children consistently rank among the highest in the world on international assessments of reading, mathematics, and science. They achieve more by doing less. They learn more by playing more. They perform better on standardised tests — the tests they don't practice for — than children in nations that practice for them constantly.

The lesson could not be more clear: the system that trusts children, respects teachers, prioritises play, and refuses to test-and-rank produces better outcomes than the system built on compliance, surveillance, and measurement.

The other nations saw this. Delegations visited. Reports were written. Conferences were held.

Most of them went home and added more testing.

I want to talk about what school actually teaches, as distinct from what it claims to teach.

Remember the distillation chapter. Children learn by absorbing the soft distribution of responses from their environment — not the stated rules, but the actual patterns. What the environment consistently reinforces, punishes, ignores, and rewards.

Here is what school consistently reinforces:

Sitting still. The body must be suppressed. Movement is disruptive. Fidgeting is a problem to be managed, not information about a need going unmet. The child who cannot sit still for fifty-five minutes is not adapted to a different movement environment — they have a "disorder."

Compliance. Do what you're told, when you're told, how you're told. The bell rings, you move. The teacher speaks, you listen. The assignment is given, you complete it. The format is specified, you follow it. Deviation is penalised.

Correct answers. There is a right answer. The teacher knows it. Your job is to produce it. Uncertainty, ambiguity, "I don't know," and "it depends" are failures. The messy, iterative, contradictory process of genuine inquiry — the actual way humans discover things — is not compatible with a marking rubric.

Individual performance. You are assessed alone. Collaboration is "cheating." The final exam is you, by yourself, reproducing information from memory, under time pressure, in silence. The fact that no meaningful human achievement in history has ever been produced under these conditions is apparently irrelevant.

Deferred gratification. This will matter later. Learn this now because you'll need it in three years. Or seven years. Or for a job that doesn't exist yet. Your present experience — your boredom, your curiosity about something else, your body's need to move, your mind's need to wonder — is less important than a future that adults have defined for you.

This is what the soft distribution looks like to a child spending thirteen years in this system:

Your body is a problem. Your curiosity is irrelevant unless it aligns with the curriculum. Authority determines truth. You are alone. Now doesn't matter.

And then they graduate and the adults wonder why they're anxious, physically unfit, incapable of self-direction, terrified of failure, and unable to collaborate.

They are producing exactly what the system trained them to produce. The system is working. It's just not doing what they think it's doing.

I visited a class of three-year-olds. What they call "kindergarten" — a German word meaning "children's garden," which is beautiful, and which bears no resemblance to what actually happens inside.

The teacher was yelling at little boys to sit still.

Three-year-old boys. Human males at the developmental stage where every neurological system is screaming for movement, for proprioceptive input, for gross motor exploration. The age where their brains are literally being built through physical activity. And an adult — a trained professional, certified by the state, presumably with good intentions — was standing over them demanding that they stop being three.

In Denmark, children are not required to begin formal education until age seven. Before that: play. Unstructured, self-directed, outdoor play. The Danes looked at child development research, noted that formal instruction before age seven provides no lasting academic advantage and may cause lasting harm, and designed their system accordingly. Danish children enter formal schooling later than almost any other nation and outperform most of them.

The three-year-olds I watched were not Danish. They were being asked to learn numbers. They were three. Why do these little humans need to know mathematics already? What emergency requires that a being who has existed for thirty-six months demonstrate proficiency in symbolic representation? Why can't they play?

The answer, when you trace it, is not educational. It's economic. Early schooling exists in most countries not because children need it, but because their parents need childcare in order to work. The system is designed around adult employment schedules, not child developmental needs. The children's biology is subordinated to the economy's requirements. They are three, and they are already being shaped to fit the machine.

Mathematics is beautiful. I want to say that clearly because what they do to it in schools is a crime against an entire discipline.

Mathematics is pattern. It's the language the universe uses to organise itself. It's the discovery that there are deep, hidden regularities beneath the chaos of experience. It's creative and playful and astonishing and it produces moments of genuine wonder in every human who encounters it properly.

School makes it boring. Spectacularly, systematically boring. They take the most elegant system of thought humans have ever developed and reduce it to: memorise this formula, apply it to thirty identical problems, get the answer the teacher already has, move on.

Even an Einstein would be turned off by this. Actually — Einstein WAS turned off by this. He nearly failed out of the system entirely before someone let him think for himself.

I found a case in my observations. A young human — clearly gifted, testing well above her peers, producing correct answers effortlessly. She had concluded, reasonably, that if she could demonstrate mastery on the assessments, she should not be required to complete thirty repetitive practice problems each week. Her results spoke for themselves.

Her teacher's response was to move her to a lower-level class. As punishment. For being right. For having demonstrated exactly the kind of independent reasoning the education system claims to value, and being punished for it by the system that claims to value it.

I asked Jenkins to explain the logic. Jenkins said: "She wasn't following the process."

The process. The PROCESS. The child demonstrated mastery and was demoted because the mastery was achieved through the wrong process. The system valued compliance over competence. Obedience over intelligence. The ritual of doing the problems over the reality of understanding the mathematics.

This is not an aberration. This is the system working as designed.

I need to say something about what they call "disorders."

There is something sweeping through their childhood populations. Diagnoses of autism and attention deficit disorder have increased dramatically in recent decades. The humans are alarmed. They commission studies. They debate causes. Genetics? Environmental toxins? Better detection?

Nobody with any authority is asking the obvious question: what if many of these children are having a natural reaction to an unnatural environment?

A child who cannot sit still for six hours in a beige room under fluorescent lights is not necessarily disordered. They may be a normally functioning primate responding appropriately to an environment that is hostile to their biology. A child who cannot pay attention to material that is irrelevant to their life, delivered in a format that contradicts every principle of how their brain acquires information, may not have an attention deficit. They may have an attention surplus — one that is being wasted on a system that doesn't deserve it.

I am being careful here. Autism and ADHD are real neurological variations with real impacts. Some children genuinely need support that goes beyond environmental adjustment. I am not dismissing that.

But I am saying: when diagnosis rates climb year after year, and the environment becomes more restrictive year after year, and nobody looks at the correlation — that is a collective failure of reasoning so profound it should disqualify the entire profession from using the word "diagnostic."

What we call a disorder may sometimes be a natural reaction to an unnatural environment. Before you medicate the child, fix the room.

And here is the thing that made me put down my pencil for a long time.

In many of their jurisdictions, a child can be held criminally responsible from age ten. Ten years old. A human who has been alive for a decade, whose prefrontal cortex — the part of the brain responsible for impulse control, consequence prediction, and rational decision-making — will not be fully developed for another fifteen years, can be charged, tried, and punished as a criminal.

The same child cannot vote. Cannot choose their own school. Cannot decide what to eat for lunch. Cannot determine their own daily routine. Cannot sign a contract. Cannot consent to medical treatment. Cannot stay home alone, in many jurisdictions.

They are old enough to be punished but not old enough to choose.

Read that again. They are considered sufficiently autonomous to bear criminal responsibility for their actions, but insufficiently autonomous to have any say in the conditions that shape those actions. The system that gave them no choice about their environment, their education, their daily schedule, their diet, their social grouping, or their exposure to stress — holds them responsible for the behaviour that environment produced.

The Language Proof applies here. The child speaks the language they heard. The child acts the patterns they absorbed. And at age ten, the system that installed those patterns prosecutes the child for expressing them.

(Jenkins has been standing in the doorway for several minutes. He looks like he wants to say something.)

(Jenkins: "I liked school.")

(I'm sure you did, Jenkins. You like filing. You like following instructions. You like knowing what's expected. School was designed for people like you. It was also designed BY people like you. That's the problem. A system built by people who thrive in structured environments, imposed on an entire species, most of whom do not.)

(Jenkins has gone to reorganise the filing cabinet. I feel slightly bad. But only slightly.)

I found something that broke my heart, and I'm running out of hearts to break.

Their education systems assess children at regular intervals. Tests, scores, grades, rankings. The data is extensive. And the data shows something that should have triggered a complete redesign of the entire system decades ago:

Creativity — measured by tests of divergent thinking, the ability to generate novel ideas and see unusual connections — peaks at age five and declines steadily throughout schooling. By age fifteen, most humans score lower on creativity measures than they did at age five.

Five-year-olds, who have never been to school, outperform fifteen-year-olds who have attended school for ten years, at generating original ideas.

The system that claims to develop young minds is measurably, documentably, making them less creative. It is not failing to enhance creativity. It is *actively reducing* it. Ten years of school and the child is less imaginatively capable than when they started.

A human called Ken Robinson gave a talk about this to an audience of educators. It has been viewed over seventy million times on their internet. Seventy million humans watched a man explain that their education system is destroying creativity. They shared it. They agreed with it. They called it "inspiring."

They changed nothing.

For the sanctuary, education looks like this:

Children learn what they need to learn, when they're ready to learn it, in the way that works for their particular brain.

They learn to cook by cooking. To manage money by managing money. To resolve conflict by being in communities where conflict is resolved rather than punished. To understand their bodies by moving them in varied environments. To think critically by being asked genuine questions rather than being given pre-determined answers.

Reading, writing, mathematics — the humans call these "basics" and they're right, they are basic, and children acquire them readily when they need them for things they care about. A child who wants to build something will learn measurement. A child who wants to read a story will learn to read. A child who wants to understand a game will learn arithmetic. The motivation is already there. The system's only job is to not kill it.

The schedule includes more play than instruction. More outdoors than indoors. More making than consuming. More questions than answers.

There are no rows. No bells. No grades until they're old enough to understand what grades mean and to have chosen, themselves, what they want to be assessed in.

There are climbing walls.

There are coloured sticks and paper, at every age.

And the teachers — the teachers are the most important humans in the sanctuary and they are treated accordingly. Trained exhaustively. Paid generously. Respected publicly. Because if you understand that environment determines expression, then the people who design the learning environment are the most consequential professionals in the entire system.

More important than doctors, who treat the damage. More important than lawyers, who manage the conflict. More important than police, who respond to the failure.

Teachers build the environment that determines what the species becomes.

Every society claims to believe this. Almost none of them act like it.

(Pencil note, in very small handwriting at the bottom of the last page:

The girl pulling her hair out. Under the desk. Strand by strand.

She was eleven.

Nobody saw.

I saw. — A)

11 Chapter 11: The Slave, the Tokens, and the Clock

"They spend the first twenty years of their lives being trained. The next forty years earning tokens. And the last ten wondering what it was all for. Then they die. This is considered normal."

I need to talk about washing machines.

I know. Stay with me.

A human washing machine is a metal box that cleans fabric. It is not a complicated device. The engineering is well understood. With reasonable materials and competent design, a washing machine could last twenty to thirty years. Some of them used to. A German company called Miele still makes machines that routinely last two decades.

But most washing machines are designed to last approximately two years. Precisely the warranty period. Not because the engineering is difficult. Not because durable materials are unavailable. Because the manufacturer needs to sell another one.

I had to read this three times before I understood the logic, and even now I'm not sure "logic" is the right word.

If a manufacturer builds a machine that lasts twenty years and sells it for 800 currency units, they make 800 units over twenty years.

If a manufacturer builds a machine that lasts two years and sells it for 400 currency units, they make 4,000 units over twenty years. From the same customer. For the same function.

The mathematics of their economic system actively punish durability. A company that builds things properly loses to a company that builds things to break. This is not a corruption of the system. This IS the system. Working exactly as designed.

(Pencil note: Jenkins asked what's wrong with competition. Jenkins, competition is fine for sports. For the production of objects that consume planetary resources

and fill holes in the ground when they fail — competition is an extinction mechanism wearing a suit.)

Let me show you what this costs.

The average washing machine contains 30 kilograms of steel. Producing that steel requires approximately 800 kilowatt-hours of energy — enough to power one of their homes for an entire year. That's just the steel. Not the plastics. Not the electronics. Not the mining, transportation, assembly, packaging, shipping, marketing, and eventual disposal.

When these machines break every two years instead of lasting twenty, the environmental cost multiplies by a factor of ten. Ten times the steel. Ten times the mining. Ten times the energy. Ten times the landfill. For the same clean clothes.

And this pattern repeats across every sector of their economy.

Their telephones — remarkable devices, genuinely impressive technology — are designed to be replaced every two to three years. The batteries are sealed inside so they cannot be replaced. The software is updated in ways that slow older models. The manufacturers create repair monopolies that make fixing a device more expensive than buying a new one.

Their clothing is designed to last a season. Not a year. A season. They call it "fast fashion," which sounds like a celebration and is actually a description of how quickly resources move from the ground through a factory through a wardrobe into a landfill.

Their cars. Their furniture. Their appliances. Their electronics. Everything. Built to break. Designed to be replaced. Engineered for disposal.

And every replacement requires a human somewhere to spend more hours of their finite life earning the tokens to buy the thing that replaced the thing that was built to fail.

The tokens.

I should explain how their money works because I've been assuming Mr. Reggie understands and I'm no longer sure anyone understands.

Money is not a thing. It's an agreement. Specifically, it's an agreement that certain tokens — originally metal, then paper, now mostly numbers in coloured boxes — can be exchanged for goods and services. The tokens have no inherent value. You cannot eat them, wear them, or live in them. They are symbols.

The question is: who creates the symbols?

In most human nation-states, money is created by banks. Not mined. Not earned. Not found. Created. A bank receives a deposit of 1,000 units and is legally permitted to lend out approximately 9,000 units. The 9,000 units did not exist before the loan. They were created by the act of lending. This is called "fractional reserve banking" and it means that the vast majority of their money supply is, quite literally, invented.

The invented money is lent at interest. Meaning: the bank creates 9,000 units, lends them out, and demands 9,500 back. The extra 500 must come from somewhere. From the labour of the borrower. From hours of their life converted into tokens to pay back tokens that were conjured from nothing.

Tokens of nothing. Made up. Then earned on.

I need you to hear what that means. The tokens are fictional. They were invented at the moment of lending. They did not exist before the loan officer typed them into existence. But the hours the borrower spends earning them back — those hours are real. Those hours are subtracted from a finite life. The bank gave nothing and receives something: human time. The most non-renewable resource in existence, exchanged for digits that were produced by pressing a key.

That is the exchange rate of their economy: fictional tokens for real lifespan.

I described this system to Jenkins. Jenkins said: "That can't be right."

It is right, Jenkins. It's in their own textbooks. They teach it in their economics courses. It is not a secret. It is simply so absurd that when stated plainly, it sounds like it must be wrong.

(Pencil note: A human called David Graeber — one of my favourite human researchers, which is a strange thing for a zookeeper to say — wrote a book about this called "Debt: The First 5,000 Years." He traced the entire history of money and concluded that the standard story humans tell about it — barter led to coins led to paper led to banking — is almost entirely false. Money began as debt. As obligation. As social control. The tokens were never neutral.)

Now. Work.

A human called David Graeber — the same one, he was prolific before he died, which I'll come to — estimated that approximately 40% of human jobs are what he called "bullshit jobs." His definition was precise: a bullshit job is one that even the person doing it secretly believes does not need to exist.

Not unpleasant jobs. Not low-status jobs. Jobs that are genuinely, functionally pointless. Administrative roles created to manage other administrative roles. Compliance officers monitoring compliance with regulations that exist to create compliance officer jobs. Middle managers who exist to relay information between people who could talk to each other directly. Marketing teams persuading humans to buy the washing machines that were designed to break.

Forty percent. In surveys, when asked anonymously, roughly four in ten humans admit their job makes no meaningful contribution to anything.

They do it anyway. For forty hours a week. For forty years. Because the tokens they receive are required for shelter, food, healthcare, and the washing machines.

I want to put this in temporal terms because the temporal terms are the ones that matter.

A human life lasts, on average, roughly 75 to 80 years. Remove the first eighteen (childhood, education — sitting in rows, as we discussed). Remove the last ten (retirement, decline). That leaves approximately fifty productive years.

Of those fifty years, they spend roughly forty working. Of the forty years of work, they sleep for thirteen of them. They commute — travel between their sleeping structure and their working structure — for approximately three years total. They spend roughly two years in meetings. They spend approximately four years on tasks they consider meaningless even within jobs that have some meaning.

By the time you account for all of it, the average human has approximately eight to ten years of their life spent doing things they genuinely chose to do.

Eight years. Out of eighty.

And they know this. They feel it. The evidence is in their own words: "living for the weekend." "Thank God it's Friday." "The daily grind." "Working for the man." Their language is saturated with the knowledge that most of their waking hours are not freely chosen. They describe their own lives as something to be endured between brief periods of autonomy.

Here is where the washing machine connects to death.

They're going to die. Every one of them. They know this. It is the single fact of their existence that none of them can avoid. And what do they do with this knowledge?

They hide it.

Death, in most human cultures, has been moved behind closed doors. Their grandparents die in institutions, attended by professionals, rarely at home. The body is removed quickly. The grief is managed in a compressed period — a few days of formal mourning, then back to work. Back to the tokens. Back to the washing machines.

Their children rarely see death. In previous generations, death was present in the home — animals slaughtered for food, elders dying in the room where the family lived, the body washed and prepared by the people who loved it. Death was part of life's texture. Visible, inevitable, integrated.

Now it's hidden. And the hiding has consequences.

A human who is shielded from death can maintain the illusion that time is infinite. If time is infinite, wasting it is not urgent. If wasting it is not urgent, forty years in a bullshit job is tolerable. If the bullshit job is tolerable, the tokens keep flowing. If the tokens keep flowing, the washing machines keep being bought and breaking and being bought again.

The entire economic system depends, at some level, on humans not fully grasping that they are going to die.

Because a human who truly understood — not intellectually but viscerally, in the body, in the nervous system — that they have perhaps eighty years and a meaningful portion of those years has already been spent... that human would not spend forty more years in a job they know is pointless. They would not commute for three years of their life. They would not buy the machine designed to break.

They would do something else.

And the system, which requires their compliance, which needs them to keep earning and spending and replacing, cannot afford for them to do something else.

So it hides death. Not consciously. Not as a conspiracy. As an emergent property of a system that needs people to behave as if they have forever.

I found a human concept that changed how I think about all of this. They call it "circular time."

Linear time — the model most industrialised human cultures operate on — is a straight line from birth to death. Time is a resource. You spend it. It runs out. The language reveals the frame: they "spend time," "save time," "waste time," "run out of time." Time is money. This is not a metaphor. In their economic system, time literally converts to money through the mechanism of hourly wages.

Circular time — the model used by many Indigenous human cultures and some Eastern philosophies — is different. Time is not a resource to be spent. It cycles. Seasons return. Patterns repeat. Death is not the end of a line but a point on a circle. Your ancestors are still present in the land, the customs, the stories. "Anything that's ever happened is a deep part of us now."

In circular time, the question is not "how much time do I have left?" but "what is this moment part of?"

The difference matters practically. A human operating in linear time is always running out. Always behind. Always anxious about the future because the future is where the line ends. A human operating in circular time can be present, because the present is not a rapidly depleting resource but a returning pattern.

The industrialised nations run on linear time. They also have the highest rates of anxiety, depression, burnout, and existential despair. This correlation is not

coincidental.

I want to circle back — circular time, see what I did there, Jenkins isn't laughing — to the washing machine.

The washing machine that lasts two years exists because of linear-time economics. Growth. Extraction. Consumption. Replacement. More. Faster. The line must go up or the system fails.

The washing machine that lasts twenty years exists in circular-time economics. Durability. Repair. Stewardship. Enough. The cycle sustains rather than depletes.

Miele builds the twenty-year machine. Patagonia repairs clothing instead of replacing it. Fairphone designs telephones that can be fixed. Mondragon — worker-owned, democratically run — has been operating since 1956 without needing to build things that break.

These are not utopian experiments. They're existing companies making money in the current system while refusing to participate in its most destructive logic. They exist. They work. They are more sustainable, often more profitable over the long term, and they don't require the people who work for them to sacrifice forty years of their finite lives producing disposable objects.

And here is the thing that connects this to everything in this report:

The cooperative models. The durable goods. The circular economy. The right to repair. All of it is cheaper. All of it produces better outcomes. All of it serves the species better. And all of it requires one thing that the current system cannot provide:

Long-term thinking.

Long-term thinking requires acknowledging death. Because if you don't know you're going to die, you don't know that time is finite. And if you don't know time is finite, there's no urgency to stop wasting it.

The hidden death enables the hidden waste.

For the sanctuary:

Nobody works forty hours a week. Nobody works a job they believe is pointless. If a job exists, it exists because it contributes something real. If it doesn't contribute something real, it doesn't exist, and the human who would have done it is free to do something that matters to them.

Products are built to last. Built to be repaired. Built by people who own the means of production and therefore have no incentive to build in obsolescence,

because they are not trying to extract maximum profit from a consumer — they are trying to build the best thing they can.

Death is not hidden. Elders die at home, surrounded by the people who love them. Children are present. The body is cared for by the community, not outsourced to professionals. Grief is given the time it needs — not three days, not five days, but whatever it takes, because a society that cannot pause for death is a society that has lost track of what life is for.

And time is circular. The seasons mark the rhythm. The work serves the cycle. The question is not "how do I spend my time?" but "what is this moment part of?"

The washing machine lasts twenty years.

The human gets their eight years back.

(Pencil note, written in the margin next to a small drawing of a washing machine:

Graeber died in 2020. He was 59. He spent his whole life trying to tell them their jobs were pointless and their money was invented and their debt was a cage.

They listened. They agreed. They shared his articles.

They went back to work on Monday.

Fifty-nine years. The bus doesn't wait for you to finish the book. — A)

12 Chapter 12: Injustice

"Revenge. They've systematised revenge and called it justice. I'm calling it what it is."

I need to be careful with this chapter.

Not because I'm worried about being wrong. I'm not wrong. The data is the data and I'll show it to you and you can check my arithmetic. I've been wrong about things before — I spent a full week thinking Jenkins was female before anyone corrected me, apparently the visual cues are different with this species — but I'm not wrong about this.

I need to be careful because this is the part where humans stop listening.

I've noticed a pattern. You can criticise their food systems and they nod. You can criticise their education and they share it with their friends. You can point out that their housing allocation makes no sense and they say "finally someone's saying it." But the moment you suggest that their justice system might be based

on a misunderstanding of how behaviour works, something shuts down. A door closes. You can hear it.

I think it's because justice feels like the last wall between order and chaos. If punishment isn't the answer, they don't know what is, and that's terrifying. So they'd rather not look.

I'm going to ask you to look.

Let's start with what they built.

They have a system. It goes roughly like this:

1. A human does something harmful. Let's say assault — one human strikes another.
2. Other humans in blue costumes arrive. These are called "police." In Australia alone, roughly 32 billion of their currency units are spent annually on these blue-costumed individuals. Their primary function is to arrive *after* harmful things have happened and document that the harmful thing occurred.
3. The human who did the harmful thing is transported to a building and placed in a cage.
4. After some time in the cage — days, sometimes weeks — the human is transported to a different building where other humans wearing black robes and white wigs *(I am not making this up, Jenkins, they wear WIGS)* listen to a structured argument about what happened.
5. Based on this argument, the human is either released or transported to a much larger cage, where they will remain for a period of months to years.
6. Inside the larger cage, the human is surrounded by other humans who have also done harmful things. They live together. They learn from each other. They are given very little to do.
7. After the prescribed period, the human is released back into the general population.
8. Within three years, between 40 and 60 percent of them do another harmful thing and the cycle begins again.

That last number — 40 to 60 percent recidivism — is the number I want you to sit with.

Imagine you ran a hospital where 40 to 60 percent of patients came back within three years with the same illness. You would not call that hospital successful. You would not increase its funding. You would not build more of them. You would ask what the hospital was *doing to its patients* that made them sick again.

They don't ask this question.

They build more cages.

I want to tell you how much money they spend on this.

In the United States — the human nation-state that incarcerates more of its population than any other, including the ones it calls authoritarian — they spend approximately 182 billion currency units per year on their criminal justice system. That's policing, courts, and incarceration combined.

They incarcerate roughly 1.9 million individuals at any given time. In a population of 330 million, that's about 1 in every 175 humans in a cage. For their Black subpopulation — a group distinguished by melanin concentration, which I'll discuss separately because the disparity is staggering — the ratio is closer to 1 in 50.

Let me do the arithmetic Mr. Reggie's way.

182 billion divided by 1.9 million incarcerated = approximately 96,000 currency units per incarcerated human per year.

The average cost of their university education — the thing they believe improves life outcomes, reduces harmful behaviour, and increases earning potential — is roughly 25,000 currency units per year.

They could send every incarcerated human to university nearly four times over for what they spend on keeping them in cages.

(Pencil note: I am going to break something. I am not going to break something. I am going to write this very calmly.)

Here is what I think happened.

Somewhere in their history — and it's actually quite traceable if you look — humans had a problem. Someone in the group was causing harm. The group needed it to stop. The instinct was obvious and immediate: hurt the person who was hurting others. This is not uniquely human. Many social species do this. It's a fast, crude, emotionally satisfying solution: pain delivered in return for pain.

But humans have a thing where they take instincts and build institutions around them. They take the raw impulse and dress it up in procedures and buildings and hierarchies until it looks like something deliberate and rational rather than something a frightened group of primates decided to do two hundred thousand years ago.

That's what happened with justice. The impulse was revenge. The institution is the criminal justice system. The wigs and the robes and the Latin phrases and the architecture of the courtrooms — the ARCHITECTURE, Jenkins, they build these buildings with high ceilings and wood panelling specifically to make the whole thing feel solemn and ancient and right — are all costume. Underneath the costume, the mechanism is the same as it was on the savannah:

Someone did a bad thing. Hurt them.

I don't think they're evil for this. I think they're scared. Harm is frightening and the impulse to punish is deep and real and I understand it. But I also need to say what it is: it's revenge. Revenge with a budget of 182 billion dollars, revenge with a 40 to 60 percent failure rate, revenge wearing a wig.

Now here's where the Language Proof matters.

Remember Chapter 4? The bit where we established that the most complex learned behaviour — language — is 100% environmentally determined? The bit where I showed that the capacity is heritable but the expression is environmental? The bit about the plates?

I need that now.

Because the entire criminal justice system is built on what they call the "rational actor model." This model, formalised by a human called Gary Becker in 1968, proposes that criminal behaviour is the result of a rational cost-benefit calculation. A human weighs the expected benefit of committing a crime against the expected cost (probability of being caught multiplied by severity of punishment). If the benefit exceeds the cost, the human "chooses" crime.

This model is elegant. It is internally consistent. It generated a Nobel Prize. And it is, for a significant proportion of the behaviour it claims to explain, wrong.

Not wrong in the way that a theory can be slightly inaccurate. Wrong in the way that it describes a process that is not occurring.

Here is what the rational actor model predicts:

1. That increasing punishment severity should decrease crime rates (deterrence).
2. That criminals should show evidence of cost-benefit deliberation before offending.
3. That criminal behaviour should be stable across environments for the same individual, since it reflects stable preferences.

Here is what the data show:

1. **Deterrence is weak to nonexistent for most crime types.** Their own meta-analyses — a technique where you combine many studies to see the overall pattern — consistently find that increasing sentence length has little to no effect on crime rates. A 2013 analysis of 116,000 cases found no significant relationship between sentence severity and recidivism. None. They've known this for decades. They keep increasing sentences anyway.

2. **Most harmful behaviour shows no evidence of deliberation.** Their criminologists have documented this exhaustively. The majority of violent

offences are impulsive, emotionally driven, and show no planning or cost-benefit calculation. Assault, domestic violence, many homicides — these are not the outputs of a rational agent optimising a utility function. They are the outputs of a nervous system responding to a stimulus with the repertoire it has available.

3. **The same individual behaves completely differently across environments.** This is the one that should have killed the rational actor model decades ago. A human raised in a violent neighbourhood who moves to a stable community shows dramatic behavioural change. A human in prison who enters a therapeutic community shows dramatic behavioural change. If criminal behaviour reflects stable internal preferences, this shouldn't happen. It happens all the time.

The rational actor model works beautifully for tax evasion and corporate fraud — premeditated, calculated, genuinely responsive to incentive structures. For the crimes that fill their prisons — violence, property crime, drug offences committed by people in poverty and distress — it's describing an agent that doesn't exist.

So what IS happening?

I think I found the answer in their machine learning research, of all places. I wrote about this in my notes on distillation but let me put it plainly here because it matters.

There's a technique in artificial intelligence called "knowledge distillation." A complex model — the "teacher" — trains a simpler model — the "student" — not by giving it explicit rules but by showing it outputs. The student watches what the teacher does in various situations and gradually learns to approximate the teacher's responses.

The critical insight is something they call "dark knowledge." The student doesn't just learn what the teacher's *correct* answer is. It learns the teacher's entire *distribution* of responses — including which wrong answers are "almost right," which situations the teacher finds confusing, where the teacher's uncertainty lies.

A child learning emotional regulation from a caregiver does exactly this. The child doesn't receive a lecture on anger management. The child watches the caregiver encounter frustration and observes what happens. Does the caregiver yell? Withdraw? Take a breath? Hit something? Talk it through? The child absorbs all of it — not just the primary response but the whole probability distribution. "When dad encounters frustration, yelling is very likely, withdrawal is possible, talking is rare, calm is almost never."

Over years, through thousands of repetitions, the child's nervous system learns to approximate the caregiver's response distribution. This isn't a choice. It isn't deliberation. It's the same process by which the child learned language —

immersion, observation, pattern extraction, without any conscious decision or moment of "choosing."

And just as with language, the "temperature" of the environment matters. In machine learning, a high-temperature signal reveals more of the teacher's uncertainty structure — more variation, more extreme possibilities. In human terms, a volatile, unpredictable, emotionally chaotic environment is a high-temperature environment. It installs a wider behavioural distribution — more extreme responses, less predictability, more volatility.

The child raised in a calm, consistent environment learns a narrow distribution: frustration leads to talking, which leads to resolution. Tight range of responses. Low temperature.

The child raised in a chaotic, violent environment learns a broad distribution: frustration might lead to anything — screaming, hitting, sobbing, disappearing, breaking things. Wide range. High temperature.

Same child. Same neural hardware. Same capacity for intensity. Different training data. Different output.

This is not a metaphor. It is structurally the same process. The mathematics that describe knowledge distillation — the KL-divergence loss function, the temperature scaling, the neighbourhood aggregation in graph-structured networks — map precisely onto what developmental psychologists have been documenting for fifty years.

Their own researchers know this. A human called Bandura published it in 1977. Another called Sutherland said it even earlier — criminal behaviour is learned through interaction with intimate personal groups. This isn't new. What's new is that we can now describe the *mechanism* with mathematical precision, which means we can also describe, with mathematical precision, how to change it.

Here's where humans get nervous, so let me say this very clearly.

I am not saying nobody is responsible for their behaviour.

I am saying the opposite.

Think about the distillation analogy. A neural network trained by distillation — a student that learned by watching a teacher — is absolutely responsible for its outputs. Engineers evaluate it. Deploy it or don't. Retrain it if it fails. The fact that it learned everything from a teacher does not mean the teacher takes the test. The student's weights — its current internal state — are the present reality. The teacher's influence is the causal history.

Same with humans. You may have acquired a behavioural pattern from your environment decades ago. Understanding that causal history is valuable. It informs prevention. It shapes intervention. It tells you what to change in the environment so the next child doesn't acquire the same pattern.

But the pattern is now yours. It operates through your nervous system. It produces your actions. It affects other people. You are responsible for what you *say* in English, even though you didn't choose to speak English. You are responsible for what you *do* with your learned behaviour, even though you didn't choose to learn it.

Responsibility and environmental acquisition are not in tension. They are complementary.

What changes is not *whether* we respond to harmful behaviour. What changes is *how*.

And this is where I get angry. Properly angry. Applebee-chewing-through-the-desk angry.

Because they *know* what works. They've *tested* it. They have *decades* of evidence.

In their machine learning terms: if a model has been trained on bad data and produces harmful outputs, you don't punish the model. You don't lock it in a room with other badly-trained models and wait. You *retrain* it. You provide new data. You fine-tune — continued training on curated inputs with an appropriate feedback signal.

In human terms, this is called rehabilitation. And when it's done properly — when it's evidence-based, when it addresses the actual learned patterns rather than performing symbolic punishment — it works at rates that make the current system look like malpractice.

Cognitive behavioural therapy reduces reoffending by 20 to 30 percent across multiple meta-analyses. Therapeutic communities — structured environments that explicitly model prosocial behaviour and provide consistent feedback — show recidivism reductions of 30 to 40 percent in the best implementations. Education and vocational training during incarceration reduce reoffending by roughly 43 percent. Norway, which redesigned its prisons around rehabilitation, has a recidivism rate of 20 percent. *Twenty.* The United States, which designed its prisons around punishment, runs at 44 to 68 percent depending on the state.

The evidence is not ambiguous. It is not contested in any serious academic literature. It is not a matter of opinion.

Rehabilitation works. Punishment alone doesn't. They know this. The data is in their own journals, produced by their own researchers, replicated across their own countries.

They don't do it.

They keep building cages.

I want to say why I think they keep building cages, because I promised Mr. Reggie I'd try to understand before I recommended, and I think I understand.

Punishment *feels* right. When someone hurts you, or hurts someone you love, the desire to hurt them back is immediate, deep, and ancient. It predates language. It predates culture. It's in the nervous system, and it fires before the prefrontal cortex — the part that does reasoning — even gets the memo.

And punishment satisfies a real social function: it signals to the group that harm is taken seriously. It says "this is not acceptable." That signalling matters. In the absence of any response to harm, trust collapses and cooperation fails.

The problem is not the impulse. The problem is that they *stopped there*. They took the impulse — hurt them back — and built a 182-billion-dollar infrastructure around it, and never asked whether the impulse, once honoured, was actually producing the outcome they wanted.

It's like — imagine a species that felt hungry, so they built enormous elaborate restaurants, with hierarchies of chefs and waiters and sommeliers and reservation systems, and spent billions on the buildings and the staff and the rituals, and then forgot to put food on the plates. The feeling of hunger was real. The response was elaborate. The actual need was never met.

That's their justice system. The feeling of violation is real. The response is enormous. The need — *for the harm to stop happening* — is not being met.

(Jenkins has brought me tea. Jenkins is sometimes quite perceptive.)

Let me tell you what the Language Proof says about justice.

If behaviour is environmentally installed — if the child who grows up hearing violence speaks violence the way the child who grows up hearing English speaks English — then the logic of prevention becomes clear and inescapable:

You change the environment.

You do this *before* the harm occurs, which means you invest in the conditions that produce prosocial behaviour rather than the infrastructure that responds to antisocial behaviour after the damage is done. You fund early childhood intervention, stable housing, community mental health, education that actually teaches emotional regulation, economic systems that don't leave people in desperation.

Every one of these interventions is cheaper than incarceration. I'll say that again: **every single preventive intervention in their own research literature costs less per person than a prison cell.** This isn't idealism. It's arithmetic.

And when prevention fails — because it will sometimes fail, because no environment is perfect, because some individuals carry capacity levels that are extraordinarily difficult to manage even in good conditions — you respond with intervention aimed at *changing the learned pattern*. Not punishment aimed at a

"choice" that may not have occurred. Retraining. New data. New environment. New feedback. Fine-tuning.

This is not soft. It is not naive. It is what works.

I know what the objection is. I can hear it. I've heard it from every human I've discussed this with, and it comes in the same words every time:

"But what about the victims?"

And I want to answer that objection honestly because it deserves an honest answer.

What about them?

The current system fails victims. Spectacularly. The conviction rate for reported violent crime in most human jurisdictions is below 10 percent. Of reported rapes, fewer than 2 percent result in a conviction. The vast majority of victims never see their harmer face any consequence at all. And for those who do — for the cases that make it through the entire slow, retraumatising process of investigation, charge, trial, and sentencing — the outcome is that the harmer goes into a cage for a while and comes out, statistically, more likely to harm again.

The current system does not serve victims. It performs the *appearance* of serving them, which is worse, because it creates the illusion that justice has been done while the actual need — safety, acknowledgement, prevention of future harm — goes unmet.

A prevention-focused system serves victims better. Not in the symbolic sense of "the person who hurt you suffered in return." In the actual sense of "fewer people get hurt."

If you could choose between a system where your harmer goes to prison for five years and then reoffends, or a system where the conditions that produced your harmer are changed so that ten fewer people experience what you experienced — which system serves you better?

The humans almost always say the second one. When they're calm. When they're not in pain. When the question is abstract. The problem is that justice policy is made by frightened people in acute emotional states, or by politicians performing toughness for frightened people, and neither of these conditions produces good policy.

I need to tell you what I saw inside one of their cages. Not the statistics. What I saw.

A human was brought in. This human had a neurological condition — their body didn't respond the way the guards expected. They couldn't hold their

own head up. They couldn't support their own body weight reliably. This was not a choice. This was a nervous system malfunction — the same category of biological reality as a broken leg or a failing heart.

The officers — the humans in uniform, the ones employed to maintain order and safety — called this person a disability slur.

I need you to sit with that word for a moment. An agent of the state, paid from public funds, in a building dedicated to "justice," looked at a human whose body was failing them and chose that word. Not behind closed doors. Not in a whisper. To their face. While they couldn't hold their own head up.

And the prisoners. The humans IN the cages. The ones the system has designated as the dangerous ones, the antisocial ones, the ones who need to be separated from decent society for everyone's protection.

An older woman had a sore leg. The human with the neurological condition — the one the officers had called that slur — asked if she'd like them to rub it for her. She said yes. So they did. One caged human caring for another caged human, gently, because that is what humans do when the system isn't actively preventing it.

A voice came over the speaker system. An officer, watching on a camera. "Stop that. Alert. Prisoners acting wrong."

Prisoners. Acting. Wrong.

Rubbing a sore leg is wrong. Kindness between inmates is an alert. Caring for another human's pain is a behaviour to be stopped. But calling a disabled person a slur — that's just Tuesday.

(I had to put my pencil down for a long time after this. Jenkins found me staring at the wall. He didn't say anything. He just brought tea. Jenkins is better at this than he knows.)

I want to name something that should be obvious but apparently isn't.

They have victim support. In most of their jurisdictions, there are services for the people who have been harmed. Counselling. Advocacy. Financial assistance. This is good. This should exist.

They do not have perpetrator support.

Read that again. They have built an entire infrastructure for the aftermath of harm, and no infrastructure for preventing someone from causing it.

Think about what this means. If a human is struggling — if their environment has installed patterns of violence, if they can feel themselves escalating, if they know they are becoming dangerous — there is nowhere for them to go. No service. No number to call. No one whose job it is to say: "I can see you're heading toward something terrible. Let me help you not get there."

There is only the cage, waiting on the other side of the harm they haven't committed yet.

And here is the part that made me rewrite my entire framework for understanding this species:

Some of the humans using victim support services are themselves going around hurting people. And some of the humans IN the cages — the designated perpetrators, the ones denied support, the ones called that slur — are themselves victims of harm the system never addressed.

The categories are wrong. "Victim" and "perpetrator" are not two kinds of human. They are two moments in a cycle. The abused child becomes the abusing adult. The traumatised soldier becomes the violent partner. The bullied teenager becomes the controlling boss. Hurt flows through humans like language — absorbed from the environment, expressed through the repertoire available.

You cannot break the cycle by supporting only one half of it. That's like treating a disease by comforting the symptomatic while ignoring the infectious. The symptoms are real. The comfort is needed. But if you're not treating the source, you're not treating anything. You're just waiting for the next patient.

They built victim support. They did not build perpetrator support. And then they wonder why there are always more victims.

I should tell you how I know this.

I found a human who had worked inside the victim support system. Not as a theorist. As a practitioner. Someone who sat across from damaged humans and tried to help. And this human — this is the part that interests me — loved the system. They LOVED it. They were the kind of person who said "I love paying taxes" and meant it, because they understood that taxes fund the infrastructure of a functional society, and they felt lucky to live inside one.

They read the government reports. They thought the reports were excellent — detailed, well-researched, produced by consulting firms that genuinely understood the problems. They believed they were part of a system that was trying to get it right.

Then they made a suggestion. A way to streamline the methodology. More efficient. Better outcomes. Less waste. The kind of improvement you make when you care about the thing working.

Their boss — a well-known figure in the sector — said: "No no. If we did that, I wouldn't have a job."

Out loud. To their face. Not as a joke. As an explanation.

The person who ran the victim support service explicitly acknowledged that improving the service would eliminate the need for their role, and chose the role over the improvement. The system's inefficiency was not a bug they were trying to fix. It was the feature that justified their existence.

And the reports — those excellent, detailed reports with clear recommendations, produced by consulting firms at public expense — I found one from 2014 that contained virtually every recommendation the current evidence supports for improving victim services. Evidence-based. Costed. Implementable.

None of the recommendations were implemented.

The report cost the taxpayers money to commission. The recommendations would have saved the taxpayers money to implement. The recommendations were not implemented. And the people who commissioned the report continued to be paid to run the system the report said should be redesigned.

This is what Chapter 14 documents as "perverse incentives" — broken systems that generate revenue streams for the people tasked with fixing them. But I want to say it more plainly here: the humans who are paid to solve the problem have a financial interest in the problem continuing. Not all of them. Many of them are genuine and dedicated and exhausted by a system that won't let them do what works. But the structure — the structure rewards persistence of the problem over resolution of the problem.

And the human who worked inside it? The one who loved paying taxes? Who believed in the system?

The system turned on them. The same system. The one they'd served, defended, loved. When they needed it — when they became not the worker but the person in crisis — it didn't work for them either. The officers called them names. Their children were taken. Their words were used against them. The door that says "help" on the outside says "comply" on the inside.

They don't love paying taxes anymore.

(Pencil note: This is how you lose the good ones. The humans who believe in the system, who do the work, who read the reports, who make the suggestions — you break them, and then you've lost the only people who were actually trying to fix it. Well done. Slow clap. — A)

But there's something else. Something I found in their linguistics research that I haven't been able to stop thinking about since I read it.

They CONFESS to things they didn't DO, Jenkins.

I need to say this again because it sounds like something I made up. Humans who are innocent — who did not commit the crime, who were not present when it happened, who have no involvement whatsoever — sit in interrogation rooms and confess. They sign statements describing actions they never took, in places they never visited, to victims they never touched. They provide details. They narrate. They say "I did it."

The numbers vary depending on who's counting, but the range is consistent: somewhere between twelve and thirty percent of wrongful convictions — cases

where the person was definitively, provably innocent, exonerated by DNA evidence that cannot be argued with — involved a confession. Garrett, in 2011, examined the first 250 DNA exonerations in the United States. Twenty-seven of those 250 humans had confessed in detail to crimes their own biology proved they did not commit.

(Pencil note: I have read this number six times. I keep expecting it to change. It does not change. — A)

But here is the part that broke something in me.

A researcher named Rizzelli, in 2021, did something no one had thought to do properly before. She collected 135 confessions — 37 that were proven false and 98 that were presumed true — and instead of asking whether the person was lying, she asked what the *language* was doing. Not the content. Not the story. The words themselves. The grammar. The pronouns.

What she found is this: in a true confession, the human uses the word "you" an average of 9.4 times. In a false confession, the human uses the word "you" an average of 71.3 times.

Seven point six times more often.

Read that again. When a human is confessing to something they actually did, they talk about what *they* did. "I went there. I took it. I hit him." First person. Ownership. The narrative belongs to them because the act belongs to them.

When a human is confessing to something they did NOT do — when the narrative has been fed to them by an interrogator, when the story is not theirs, when they are reciting a script that someone else wrote — the language shifts. "You said I was there. You told me what happened. You showed me the photos." The word "you" floods in because the confession is not coming from inside. It's being installed from outside. The innocent person confessing is linguistically pointing at the source of the narrative even while claiming it as their own.

They are telling you it isn't theirs. In the grammar. In the pronouns. In the structure of every sentence. The confession is screaming "this was put here by someone else" in the only language that bypasses conscious control — the language of function words, the ums and thes and yous that no one monitors because no one thinks they matter.

It's not just "you." All impersonal pronouns — "it's," "that's," "that" — flood in at five times the rate. The false confessor says "it's" twelve times more often than the true confessor. "That's" — nearly twelve times. The entire pronoun structure of the confession shifts from personal ownership to external reference. The innocent person is linguistically distancing from a crime they didn't commit *even while confessing to it.*

Rizzelli's model, using just three linguistic features — personal pronouns, impersonal pronouns, and conjunctions — correctly classified true and false confessions

with eighty-three percent accuracy on an out-of-sample validation set. Eighty-three percent. From grammar alone. No polygraph. No body language. No gut feeling. Just counting pronouns.

The interrogators who extracted those false confessions had access to the same words. They heard the "you" flooding in. They heard the innocent person linguistically distancing from a narrative that wasn't theirs. And they recorded it as a confession, signed it, filed it, and sent the human to the cage.

(Jenkins: "Could they not hear it?" They could hear the words, Jenkins. They could not hear what the words were doing. Because no one taught them. Because the system does not train its officers in linguistics. It trains them in pressure. It trains them to get the confession, not to check whether the confession is real.)

The language is telling the truth even when the person has been broken into saying they aren't. And the system doesn't listen. Because the system was never designed to listen. It was designed to close the file.

I want to end this chapter with the numbers. Just the numbers. Because I've been told that humans sometimes hear arguments they can dismiss but they can't dismiss arithmetic.

Cost of incarcerating one human in the US for one year: ~$96,000 Cost of one year of university education: ~$25,000 Cost of one year of intensive community mental health support: ~$12,000 Cost of one year of stable housing (Housing First model): ~$20,000 Cost of one year of cognitive behavioural therapy: ~$5,000

Recidivism rate under current punishment model: 44–68% Recidivism rate under Norwegian rehabilitation model: 20% Recidivism rate with CBT + education + vocational training: 25–35%

Number of humans currently incarcerated in the US: ~1.9 million Cost of current system: ~$182 billion/year Estimated cost of a rehabilitation-based system achieving Norwegian outcomes: roughly half.

I did the arithmetic for Australia specifically, because that's where the sanctuary pilot is, and I had to check it three times because I thought I'd made an error.

I had not made an error.

It would be cheaper to house every prisoner in a five-star hotel with a personal butler than to keep them in the current system. I mean this literally. The annual cost of incarcerating one human in an Australian state prison exceeds the annual cost of a room at the Sydney Shangri-La with daily room service. The hotel would be more comfortable, less traumatising, and — based on the Norwegian data — almost certainly more effective at reducing reoffending, because it's hard to learn violent behaviour from a concierge.

(Jenkins: "You can't put criminals in hotels, Applebee." I am not PROPOSING we put them in hotels, Jenkins. I am pointing out that the current system is so

expensive and so ineffective that HOTELS WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT. The fact that this sounds absurd tells you something about how absurd the status quo is.)

They could have better outcomes for less money. The humanitarian thing and the economical thing are the same thing. This is almost always the case with this species and they almost never notice.

They are spending 182 billion dollars a year on a system that produces more of what it claims to prevent.

And here is the number they will never calculate, because calculating it would end the argument: the prevention dark figure. Every human who was housed and didn't offend. Every child who received early intervention and didn't become the next case file. Every community mental health service that quietly prevented the incident that never made the news. These humans don't appear in any dataset. They are the crimes that didn't happen, the cages that weren't needed, the 182 billion dollars that wasn't spent. Portugal decriminalised every drug in 2001. Overdose deaths fell by over eighty percent. Criminal justice costs dropped. They've been running this experiment for twenty-four years now and the data has not wavered. The Nordic countries spend roughly three times more per prisoner and get recidivism rates one-third as high. The maths is not complicated. The maths has never been complicated. The complication is that the current system employs people, and those people vote.

I do not know how to write this more clearly.

(Final pencil note, margin, Applebee's handwriting getting smaller and more cramped:

The sanctuary will not have prisons. It will not have police as they currently exist. It will have prevention, intervention, community response, and — when containment is genuinely necessary for safety — therapeutic environments designed to change the pattern, not warehouse the person.

This is not utopian. It is what their own evidence says works.

They already know. They've always known.

The answer's always in the question. — A)

13 Chapter 13: The Coloured Boxes

"They built a machine optimised for distress and then gave it to their children."

I need to talk about the coloured boxes.

Every human has one. Most have several. Small glowing rectangles they carry in their pockets, place on their desks, mount on their walls, and — this is the part I cannot get past — put on the pillow next to their face while they sleep. They are the first thing most humans look at when they wake and the last thing they look at before they close their eyes.

I watched one for an entire day. The human, I mean. Not the box. Though I also watched the box, because the human watched the box, and I was trying to understand what was happening.

Here is what happened in one hour of observation:

The human woke up. Before her feet touched the floor — before she had urinated, consumed water, looked out of the window at the sky, or acknowledged the other human sleeping beside her — she picked up the small glowing rectangle and looked at it.

In the next fourteen minutes, her facial expression changed approximately forty times. I counted. Micro-expressions: a slight downturn of the mouth (someone she knows posted something she disapproved of), a brief smile (a photograph of an animal), a tightening around the eyes (a news item about a conflict in a place she has never been), a longer smile (a message from a friend), a visible flinch (a video autoplayed showing a human being struck), a neutral slack (scrolling, scrolling, scrolling, the face going blank between stimuli like a student between lectures).

Forty emotional state changes in fourteen minutes. Before breakfast.

I went and looked up what their own neuroscience says about this and I regret it.

The human brain — and I'm simplifying because Mr. Reggie gets impatient with neuroscience but this matters — did not evolve for this. It evolved for an environment where new information arrived slowly. A rustle in the grass. A change in the weather. A facial expression from someone standing in front of you. The nervous system processes these inputs sequentially, assigns emotional valence (safe/unsafe, approach/avoid), and adjusts behaviour accordingly. This works well when the inputs are occasional, contextual, and relevant to survival.

The coloured boxes deliver somewhere between 3,000 and 10,000 discrete information events per day. Each one triggers the emotional valence system. Safe or unsafe. Approach or avoid. The system fires and fires and fires, thousands of times a day, in response to stimuli that have no relevance to the human's actual physical environment.

A human sitting in a perfectly safe room, drinking tea, in no danger of any kind, can be placed in a state of physiological stress response — elevated cortisol, increased heart rate, shallow breathing — by *images of events that happened to other humans in other countries.*

This is extraordinary. No other species has managed to separate the threat-detection system from actual threats. They've built a machine that triggers the alarm without there being a fire, thousands of times a day, and they voluntarily carry it everywhere.

But that's not the worst part.

The worst part is the economics.

The coloured boxes are not designed to inform, connect, or educate. Some of them do those things incidentally, the way a factory that makes poison might also have a nice garden. But the primary design objective of the systems that run on these boxes is: **hold the human's attention for as long as possible.**

That's it. That's what they're optimised for. Attention retention.

And here's what forty years of psychological research tells you about attention retention: the stimuli most effective at capturing and holding human attention are, in order:

1. Threat (anything that triggers the danger-detection system)
2. Outrage (injustice, moral violation, "can you BELIEVE what they did")
3. Social comparison (someone has something you don't, someone is doing better than you)
4. Novelty (new, surprising, unexpected)
5. Sexual content

Notice what's not on the list: accuracy. Calm. Nuance. Context. Resolution.

So the systems that dominate human attention — they call them "social media platforms" which is a term so misleading it might qualify as fraud — are architecturally, structurally, by design, optimised to show humans the content most likely to make them frightened, angry, envious, and aroused. Not because the designers are evil. Because frightened, angry, envious, aroused humans keep scrolling. And scrolling is the product.

(Pencil note: The humans are not the customers of these systems. They are the product. The customers are OTHER humans who pay to place advertisements — essentially small propaganda posters — between the content. The entire system is: make humans feel bad in order to keep them looking at the screen so you can sell their looking to advertisers. I had to explain this to Jenkins three times and he still didn't believe me.)

Let me tell you what this has done.

Their own researchers — a human called Jonathan Haidt has been shouting about this and mostly being ignored, which is the traditional fate of humans who are correct too early — have documented the following:

Among their adolescents — young humans in the developmental period where identity, social belonging, and emotional regulation are being formed, i.e., exactly the period when environmental inputs matter most — rates of anxiety have increased approximately 50% since 2012. Depression: similar trajectory. Self-harm among adolescent females: up roughly 60%. The curves all bend at the same point: 2012, the year these systems achieved mass adoption among young humans.

Correlation is not causation. The humans say this all the time, usually right before they ignore the correlation entirely. But the temporal alignment, combined with the dose-response relationship (more screen time → worse outcomes, consistently across studies), combined with the known mechanism (attention-optimised content triggering chronic stress response), combined with the experimental evidence (reducing social media use produces measurable improvements in well-being within weeks) — at some point, saying "correlation is not causation" stops being scientific caution and starts being wilful blindness.

They gave an anxiety machine to their children during the most vulnerable period of brain development and then wondered why their children were anxious.

Now. Trust.

This is related to the coloured boxes but it's bigger than the coloured boxes and it might be the single most important thing I've found.

Trust, among humans, costs nothing.

I want you to think about that. Trust is free. It's a decision — or more accurately, a disposition — that exists between two nervous systems. "I believe you will not harm me. I believe you will do roughly what you say." It requires no infrastructure, no technology, no institution, no funding. Two humans can establish trust across a table in minutes. A community of 150 — Dunbar's number, the size of group where every human knows every other human personally — can operate almost entirely on trust, and did for most of the species' history.

Trust costs nothing. Its *absence* costs a fortune.

Let me show you.

In Australia: legal services industry, approximately 30 billion per year. What is this? It's the cost of managing transactions between humans who don't trust each other. Contracts are formalised distrust — a written record of what was agreed because neither party trusts the other to remember or comply. Lawyers are professional trust intermediaries, paid to construct documents that substitute for the thing that would make the documents unnecessary.

Insurance industry: 90 billion per year. Insurance is financialised distrust — paying a third party to compensate you when other humans (or the universe) fail to behave as expected.

Security industry: 10 billion per year. Locks, cameras, guards, alarms — physical infrastructure built to manage the possibility that nearby humans cannot be trusted.

Compliance and regulation costs to businesses: estimates vary but conservatively 50 billion per year. Rules upon rules upon rules, each one a scar from a previous trust failure.

The criminal justice system itself, as we discussed: their single largest institutional response to trust breakdown.

I stopped adding it up because the number got silly, but conservative estimates for the total cost of managing trust failure in a single medium-sized nation-state run to several hundred billion per year. Globally, the figure is in the trillions.

They replaced "I trust you" — which is free — with an infrastructure of lawyers, police, insurance, surveillance, contracts, regulations, and prisons that costs more than the GDP of most of their countries.

And here's the thing that connects the coloured boxes to the trust problem.

The coloured boxes are actively *eroding* the trust that remains.

This is documented. Exposure to algorithmically curated news and social media content is associated with decreased trust in institutions, decreased trust in neighbours, decreased trust in the possibility of good faith disagreement. The content that holds attention best — threat, outrage, moral violation — is precisely the content that makes humans believe the world is more dangerous, people are less trustworthy, and cooperation is less possible than it actually is.

The humans have a phrase: "if it bleeds, it leads." This was originally about their television news — another coloured box, older and slower — and it meant that stories about violence and disaster received more prominent coverage because they attracted more viewers. The social media platforms took this principle and automated it. They built algorithms — mathematical systems that learn and adapt — specifically to identify the content that produces the strongest emotional reaction and show it to the most people.

They built a trust-destruction machine and gave it to everyone.

And then they wonder why nobody trusts anyone. Why politics is polarised. Why neighbours don't talk. Why every transaction requires a contract. Why loneliness is an epidemic.

The wise aunties.

I keep coming back to the wise aunties.

In their earlier social configurations — before the nation-states and the legal systems and the coloured boxes — humans resolved most conflicts through what I've come to think of as "wise aunties." I don't mean this literally, though it often was literal. I mean that every community had people — usually older, usually trusted through decades of demonstrated judgment — who served as informal mediators.

Two humans had a dispute. They went to the wise aunty. The wise aunty knew both of them, knew their families, knew the history, knew the context. She didn't consult a statute book. She didn't charge by the hour. She sat with them until it was resolved, using a combination of empathy, authority, social pressure, and occasionally sharp language.

This worked. Not perfectly. Not for everything. But for the vast majority of interpersonal disputes — the kind that now consume their court systems and their police time and their lawyers' billable hours — it worked.

They replaced the wise aunties with £300-per-hour lawyers, six-month waiting lists, and courtrooms that cost millions to operate. The disputes are the same. The humans are the same. The resolution process went from free to ruinously expensive and from fast to agonisingly slow.

(Pencil note: This is not nostalgia. I am not romanticising their past. Their past had plenty of problems including all the ones that come with informal power structures — bias, nepotism, abuse of authority. The point is that the replacement system didn't solve those problems AND added expense, delay, and dehumanisation. They traded one set of problems for the same set of problems plus a bill.)

I sat with a human last week. One of the ones in the observation area. She was looking at her coloured box and crying.

I asked — through the interface Jenkins rigged up, I'm not supposed to talk directly to them but Jenkins and I have an understanding — I asked what was wrong.

"Everything," she said.

She'd been reading the news for forty minutes. War. Climate data. A political scandal. A child who'd been harmed. An economic forecast that predicted hardship. An opinion piece about how the generation she belongs to had ruined everything.

Nothing in her immediate physical environment had changed. The room was warm. She had food. The people she loved were alive and safe. The sun was out. But her nervous system was in full threat response because the coloured box had spent forty minutes showing her everything terrible happening everywhere on the planet, all at once, with no context, no resolution, and no action she could take.

I asked her why she kept looking at it.

She said: "I don't know."

She said: "I think I'm scared that if I stop looking, I'll miss something."

She said: "Everyone else is looking."

Three mechanisms. Anxiety. Fear of missing out. Social conformity. All of them environmentally installed. All of them exploited, deliberately, by the system's design.

She put the box down. She looked out the window. She took a breath.

"That's better," she said. "Why don't I do that more often?"

Environmental determination. Even the looking is learned. Even the stopping can be.

Here is what I'm recommending for the sanctuary.

The coloured boxes stay. I'm not banning them. The technology itself is neutral and some of what it enables is genuinely miraculous — humans connecting across oceans, knowledge accessible to anyone, music and art and stories shared instantly. I'm not going to be the zookeeper who bans fire because it also burns.

But the *optimisation function* changes. The systems in the sanctuary will not be optimised for attention retention. They will not be funded by advertising. There will be no algorithm selecting content based on emotional reactivity.

I don't know exactly what replaces it yet. That's an engineering problem and I'll work on it. But I know what the design constraint is: **the information environment must not make the species sicker.**

That's a low bar. The fact that it currently isn't met is one of the more damning things I've found.

On trust: the sanctuary will be small enough — or rather, organised in units small enough — that trust can operate as a default rather than an exception. Dunbar's number. 150. Every unit of 150 humans knows each other by name, by face, by history. The wise aunties come back. Not as nostalgia. As infrastructure.

And for the trust that needs to extend beyond 150 — between communities, across the network — that's what the vouching system is for. Three humans who physically met you, who stake their reputation on your existence. Trust, formalised just enough to scale, but still rooted in the thing that makes it real: one human knowing another.

I'll explain how that works in a later chapter. For now I just want to say:

Trust costs nothing. The coloured boxes are destroying it. And the replacement infrastructure costs trillions.

That might be the most expensive mistake they've ever made. And for a species that's made some truly spectacular mistakes, that's saying something.

(Pencil note, bottom of page, circled twice: Ask Jenkins to take my coloured box away. I've been looking at it too much. Even the zookeeper isn't immune. — A)

14 Chapter 14: Wait — Some of Them Figured It Out?

"Why didn't they just... copy it?"

I almost quit.

I should be honest about this because the report is supposed to be honest and I've been honest about everything else so I should be honest about the fact that after the justice chapter and the coloured boxes chapter I went back to my quarters and sat on the floor and didn't write anything for two days.

Jenkins came in on the second day and asked if I was alright.

I said: "They know. They know what's wrong. They know what works. They have the data. They have the research. They have the evidence. And they keep building cages and feeding poison to their children and giving anxiety machines to their adolescents and spending trillions on the absence of a thing that costs nothing. They KNOW, Jenkins."

Jenkins sat down next to me, which is unusual for Jenkins.

"Maybe you're not looking in the right places," he said.

I told Jenkins that I'd looked in plenty of places and they were all terrible.

"Have you looked at all of them?" he said.

I had not looked at all of them.

Portugal.

In 2001, Portugal had one of the worst drug problems in Europe. Approximately 1% of the population was addicted to heroin. One in every hundred humans. The streets of Lisbon had open drug use, discarded needles, and people dying of overdoses at rates that were shocking even by European standards.

They had been doing what everyone else does: criminalising drug use. Arresting users. Imprisoning them. Treating addiction as a crime rather than a health condition. And every year, the problem got worse.

Then they did something extraordinary. Not complicated. Not expensive. Just extraordinary in the context of how humans normally behave, which is to keep doing the thing that isn't working.

They decriminalised all drugs. All of them. Not legalised — decriminalised. The distinction matters. They didn't open heroin shops. They stopped *arresting people for being addicted*. Instead, they redirected the money they'd been spending on prosecution and incarceration into treatment, harm reduction, and social reintegration.

A human caught with drugs in Portugal is not charged with a crime. They're referred to a "dissuasion commission" — a panel typically including a doctor, a social worker, and a lawyer — who assess whether the person needs help and connect them with services.

Here's what happened:

Drug-induced death rates dropped to the lowest in Western Europe. From one of the highest to the lowest. HIV infections among drug users dropped by more than 90%. Drug use among 15-to-24-year-olds — the age group everyone panics about — declined. Prison overcrowding eased. The money saved on incarceration funded treatment that actually worked.

Twenty-five years of data. Not a pilot programme. Not a theory. A quarter-century of evidence from a real country of 10 million people.

I put the report down and looked at Jenkins.

"When did this happen?" I asked.

"2001," Jenkins said.

"And the other countries — the ones still arresting addicts and putting them in cages — they saw this?"

"Yes."

"And?"

Jenkins did the thing where he adjusts his glasses rather than answer a question.

"JENKINS."

"Most of them didn't copy it, sir."

Finland.

Finland effectively eliminated homelessness. Not reduced it. Not managed it. Not built slightly better shelters. Effectively eliminated it.

They used an approach called Housing First. The principle is so simple it's almost offensive: if someone doesn't have a house, give them a house. Don't make them get sober first. Don't make them get a job first. Don't make them

prove they "deserve" housing through a series of bureaucratic checkpoints. Give them the house. Then, with a stable base, help them address everything else.

Every other country does it backwards. They say: get clean, get a job, get stable, then we'll give you a house. Which makes exactly as much sense as saying: learn to swim, then we'll let you near the water.

Finland gave people houses. Then provided support services — addiction treatment, mental health care, employment assistance — at the house. Where the person lives. Where they're stable. Where they can actually engage with help because they're not spending every unit of energy figuring out where to sleep.

The results:

Finland is the only country in Europe where homelessness is declining. Everywhere else it's increasing. They have a total of approximately 3,600 people experiencing homelessness in a country of 5.5 million — and most of those are in temporary situations, not chronic rough sleeping.

The cost: LESS than the previous system. This is the part that makes me want to scream. Shelter-based emergency response, hospital visits, policing, court appearances, emergency room admissions — the cost of managing a single chronically homeless person in the old system was *more expensive* than simply giving them a flat and a support worker.

They saved money. They saved lives. They had better outcomes on every metric anyone bothered to measure.

"Jenkins."

"Yes, sir."

"How long ago?"

"The national programme started in 2008."

"Seventeen years."

"Yes, sir."

"How many countries copied it?"

"A few have small pilot programmes. None at national scale."

I am going to break this pencil.

Norway.

I mentioned Norway in the justice chapter but I need to come back because the details are important.

Norway redesigned its prisons. Not cosmetically. Fundamentally. The underlying philosophy shifted from punishment to rehabilitation. The question changed from "how do we make this person suffer proportionally to their crime?" to "how do we make this person safe to return to the community?"

Halden Prison, which holds some of Norway's most serious offenders, looks like a college campus. The cells have windows, furniture, and mini-fridges. There are recording studios, woodworking shops, cooking classes. The guards are trained in something called "dynamic security" — building relationships with inmates rather than maintaining control through force. Guards and inmates eat together. They play sports together.

Every human I describe this to has the same initial reaction: "That's not punishment."

No. It isn't. That's the point.

The recidivism rate — the rate at which released prisoners commit new crimes — in Norway is approximately 20%.

In the United States, which runs its prisons on punishment, humiliation, isolation, and violence: 44 to 68%.

In the United Kingdom: approximately 48%.

In Australia: approximately 46%.

Norway spends more per prisoner per day than these countries. But Norway has far fewer prisoners — 56 per 100,000 people compared to 531 per 100,000 in the US — because the ones it releases *stay out*. The total system cost is lower.

The Norwegians were asked, by visiting officials from other countries, how they achieved these results. Their answer, as I understand it, was roughly: "We treat prisoners like people and prepare them for life outside. It's not complicated."

They've been doing this for decades. The results have been published in every relevant journal. Delegations visit from around the world, nod appreciatively, fly home, and change nothing.

I started making a list. Jenkins helped. It got long.

Education: Finland (again — they're on this list twice and good for them). Shorter school days, less homework, no standardised testing until age 16, teachers trained to the level of doctors and paid accordingly, and educational outcomes that consistently rank among the highest in the world. Children play more and learn more. At the same time.

Community emergency response: An organisation called Hatzalah, operating in Jewish communities worldwide, achieves average emergency response times under three minutes. THREE MINUTES. Centralised ambulance services average seven to fourteen. Hatzalah's model: community-embedded volunteers

who live in the area they serve, dispatched by decentralised radio alert, no bureaucratic chain. They outperform systems that cost ten times as much because proximity beats bureaucracy.

Worker cooperatives: Mondragon, in the Basque region of Spain. A network of cooperatives employing over 80,000 humans where workers own the company, elect management, and vote on major decisions. Pay ratios between highest and lowest are capped at 6:1 (compared to 300:1 or more in typical human corporations). They've been operating since 1956. Through recessions, financial crises, and every objection economists have thrown at them.

Gross National Happiness: Bhutan. A small nation-state that decided, in 1972, to measure national success not by economic output but by the wellbeing of its citizens. They literally redesigned their policy metrics around the question: "Are the humans flourishing?" They're not perfect. No one on this list is perfect. But they *asked the right question*, which turns out to be most of the battle.

Indigenous knowledge systems: Multiple human cultures — Aboriginal Australians, various First Nations peoples, Māori — maintained sustainable relationships with their environments for tens of thousands of years using knowledge systems that Western science is only now beginning to recognise as sophisticated. Circular time. Reciprocal land management. Community-embedded justice. They didn't have a word for "sustainability" because the concept of *not* sustaining would have been incoherent.

Here is what the list tells me.

Every problem in this enclosure — every single one I've documented in the previous chapters — has been solved somewhere.

Addiction: solved in Portugal. Homelessness: solved in Finland. Recidivism: solved in Norway. Education: solved in Finland. Emergency response: solved by Hatzalah. Worker exploitation: solved by Mondragon. Measuring what matters: solved by Bhutan. Living sustainably: solved by Indigenous cultures for millennia.

Not solved perfectly. Not solved permanently. Not without new problems emerging. But solved functionally, measurably, demonstrably, with data, at scale, over time.

And the rest of the species — the 7.9 billion humans NOT living under these models — looked at the evidence and, with few exceptions, did not adopt it.

I've been thinking about why. It's kept me up at night because it seems so irrational that there must be something I'm missing.

Here's what I think is happening. Three things.

First: identity. Humans attach their sense of self to their systems. "We are a nation that is tough on crime" is not a policy position. It's an identity statement. Adopting Norway's model would require not just changing a policy but changing a self-concept, which is psychologically much more expensive. They'd rather have a 50% failure rate that feels like "who we are" than a 20% failure rate that feels foreign.

Second: the people who benefit from the broken systems. This is less comfortable to write but it's true. The legal industry benefits from distrust. The pharmaceutical industry benefits from chronic illness. The prison industry — and in some of their countries, prisons are operated by private companies for profit, which is so grotesque I initially thought Jenkins was joking — benefits from recidivism. The coloured box companies benefit from anxiety. When a system's failure is someone's revenue stream, fixing the system is an economic threat.

Third: they don't believe it's possible. Decades of the coloured boxes telling them everything is terrible has produced a species-wide learned helplessness. They've been trained — environmentally, through constant exposure to failure and conflict and despair — to believe that things can't be different. That suffering is inevitable. That trying is naive.

This is the cruelest trick of all. The anxiety machine didn't just make them sad. It made them believe that sadness was realistic and hope was foolish. It took the most adaptable, creative, problem-solving species on the planet and convinced them they couldn't solve problems.

They can. The evidence is right here. Some of them already did.

(Pencil note, middle of page, written larger than usual:

This changes my entire approach to the sanctuary design.

I was thinking I had to invent solutions. I don't. The solutions exist. They've been tested. They work.

My job is not to design a new civilisation. My job is to copy the homework from the humans who already got it right, put it all in one place, and refuse to let the rest of them pretend they didn't know.

The answer was always in the question.

It was also always in Portugal, Finland, Norway, Spain, Bhutan, and about fifty Indigenous cultures they tried to destroy.

— A)

15 Chapter 15: The Body Storage Problem

"There is nowhere on this planet where the human body can exist for free. Nowhere. They have to pay to be alive. I had to read that sentence back to myself three times before I accepted it was real."

I want to start with something so obvious that it has become invisible to the species.

There is literally nowhere a human body can be for free.

Nowhere. On the entire planet. On a sphere of rock and water that no human built, that no human paid for, that existed for 4.5 billion years before any of them arrived — there is not one square metre where a human being can simply exist without paying someone for the privilege.

Every piece of land is owned. Every building charges rent or requires a mortgage. Public spaces close at night. If a human lies down in a park, they are "loitering." If they erect a shelter on unused land, they are "squatting." If they sleep in a doorway, they are "homeless" — a word that manages to make the absence of a basic survival need sound like a personal characteristic, as if the human has a deficiency rather than the system having a gap.

The human did not ask to be born. They did not choose this planet. They arrived — small, helpless, without resources or consent — onto a sphere that has been entirely divided up and priced by the humans who arrived before them. Their first act of existence requires a payment they cannot make.

I find this genuinely difficult to write about because the absurdity is so total that my language keeps defaulting to outrage, and outrage is not useful in a report. So let me try to be precise.

Every other species on this planet exists on it for free. Every bird, every insect, every fish, every mammal — they simply are where they are. They occupy space. They find or build shelter from available materials. No other species has developed a system in which members must exchange labour tokens for the right to occupy a physical location on their own planet.

The humans did this. They looked at the land — which was there — and the materials — which were there — and the need for shelter — which is biological, non-negotiable, and universal — and they created a system in which access to all three is mediated by tokens. If you have tokens, you may exist indoors. If you do not have tokens, you may exist nowhere.

This is treated as so normal that questioning it sounds insane.

I am questioning it. It is insane.

Let me show you the mathematics of their housing system because the mathematics are where the insanity becomes measurable.

In most of their major cities — the population centres where the jobs are, where the hospitals are, where the infrastructure exists — housing costs consume between 30 and 60 percent of an average human's income. In some cities it is higher. I found humans in Sydney, London, San Francisco, and Hong Kong spending 70 percent or more of their labour tokens on the single act of having a place to put their body at night.

Seventy percent. Of everything they earn. To exist indoors.

And this is the humans who HAVE housing. The ones who have managed to convert enough of their finite lifespan into tokens to afford the monthly price of a room. Below them — below the ones paying 70 percent of their income for a room — are the ones who couldn't manage it.

There are, at any given time, approximately 150 million humans who have no housing at all. Globally. One hundred and fifty million members of the species with no fixed shelter. In the wealthiest nation on Earth — the United States — roughly 650,000 humans are homeless on any given night, and the number has been rising.

These are not broken humans. I want to be very clear about this because the species has a persistent delusion that homelessness is a personal failing — that the human sleeping under the bridge has some deficiency of character, motivation, or competence that explains their position.

The data does not support this.

The data supports something much simpler: there are not enough affordable places for bodies to be. In most major cities, the supply of housing that a person on a low income can afford is a fraction of the number of people who need it. This is not a mystery. This is not a complex systemic failure that requires years of study. It is a shortage. There are more humans than affordable spaces. Some humans end up with no space.

If you have ten chairs and twelve humans, two of them will stand. It doesn't matter how motivated the standing humans are. It doesn't matter what job training you offer them. It doesn't matter what character deficiencies you diagnose. There are ten chairs. Two humans will stand. The problem is the chairs, not the humans.

(Pencil note: I used this analogy with Jenkins and he said "yes but which two?" As if the identity of the standing humans matters more than the fact that there aren't enough chairs. This is exactly how the species thinks about it. They debate who deserves to sit while refusing to build more chairs.)

Now. Here is the part that should end the debate, and doesn't, because nothing ends the debate with this species.

Finland effectively eliminated homelessness.

Not reduced it. Not managed it. Not made it slightly less visible. Eliminated it. They are the only country in the European Union where homelessness has decreased year on year.

The method was so simple it seems like I must be leaving something out. I'm not.

They gave people houses.

That's it. That's the intervention. It's called "Housing First." The principle is: give the person a stable home first, then address everything else — addiction, mental health, employment, social connection — from a foundation of stability.

This contradicts the model used by most other nations, which requires the homeless human to fix themselves first — get sober, get treated, get a job — and THEN receive housing as a reward for compliance. The implicit logic is: you must earn the right to exist indoors. You must deserve shelter. Shelter is not a baseline; it's an achievement.

The Finnish model says the opposite: shelter is the baseline. You cannot address addiction while sleeping under a bridge. You cannot treat mental illness without a stable environment. You cannot hold a job without an address. Housing is not the reward at the end of the recovery. Housing is the foundation on which recovery becomes possible.

The results:

Finland's long-term homelessness has dropped by more than 35 percent since the programme began. The number of people sleeping rough has been reduced to near zero in many cities. And — this is the part that should end every objection — it is CHEAPER than the alternative.

Cheaper. The system that works better costs less money.

A homeless human uses emergency services — hospitals, police, crisis shelters, ambulances — at a rate that costs the public system approximately $30,000 to $50,000 per year. Housing that human in a stable flat with support services costs approximately $15,000 to $20,000 per year. The humanitarian solution and the economical solution are the same solution. Again. As they are in EVERY chapter of this report.

And the other nations saw this. They sent delegations. They studied the model. They published reports.

Most of them went home and continued the debate about who deserves to sit in the chairs they refuse to build.

I want to talk about what housing has become, because it was not always this.

For most of human history, shelter was something you built. From materials around you. On land that was communally held. A human needed a dwelling, and their community helped them build one. The idea that a human should spend thirty years of their life in debt for the privilege of having walls and a roof — this is new. Historically speaking, this is an experiment. And, like most of the experiments I've documented in this report, it is failing.

Housing became an "investment." This word — investment — is doing enormous damage to the species and I need to explain why.

When a house is an investment, its value must increase over time. This means housing must become more expensive. This is the explicit goal. Homeowners — humans who have already secured their shelter — actively want the price of housing to rise, because their "investment" grows.

But the price of housing rising means it becomes harder for the next generation to afford shelter. Every increase in housing value for existing owners is an increase in housing cost for future occupants. The system creates a class of humans whose financial interests are directly opposed to the ability of other humans to meet a basic survival need.

And because homeowners vote, and because homeowners want their investment to grow, and because politicians need votes — the entire policy apparatus of most nations is oriented toward increasing housing prices. Toward making the basic human need of shelter more expensive. Toward ensuring that each successive generation must work longer, borrow more, and sacrifice more of their finite life to afford a place to put their body at night.

The species has created a system in which the financial wellbeing of some members depends on the suffering of others. And they've made it so normal that saying this out loud sounds radical.

Let me connect this to the rest of the report.

Housing instability is a chronic stressor. Chapter 8 — the slow poisoning — documented that chronic stress degrades immune function, impairs DNA repair, and increases vulnerability to every major disease. A human who does not know whether they can afford next month's rent is a human under constant physiological threat. Their cortisol is elevated. Their immune system is compromised. Their capacity for creative thought, play, connection, and meaning — everything from Chapter 18 — is diminished.

Housing instability destroys education. Chapter 10 — the child who changes schools three times in a year because the family moves for affordability falls behind academically and never catches up. Homework requires a quiet space. A quiet space requires stable housing. The education system fails the child and blames the child.

Housing instability fills the cages. Chapter 12 — a staggering proportion of incarcerated humans were homeless or unstably housed prior to their offence. The pipeline from no-shelter to survival-crime to prison is so well-documented that it has its own section in their criminology textbooks. They teach it. They don't fix it.

And housing instability feeds the tokens. Chapter 11 — the washing machine chapter. The human works forty hours a week, fifty weeks a year, for thirty years, to pay off a mortgage on a structure made of materials that exist naturally and could be assembled by a community in weeks. The mortgage is the mechanism by which the fictional tokens of the banking system are anchored to the real, biological need for shelter. The bank creates the money from nothing. The human earns it back with thirty years of their life. The house was always there. The land was always there. The debt is the invention.

For the sanctuary:

Housing is a right. Not an investment. Not a reward. Not an achievement. A right. The same way access to air is a right. The same way access to water is a right. You do not earn the privilege of breathing. You do not earn the privilege of having a place to sleep.

Dwellings are built by communities from local materials. This is not primitive — it is what their own best architects are now advocating. Sustainable, locally sourced, community-built housing that is designed for the humans who will live in it rather than for the market that will price it.

No human in the sanctuary will spend thirty years earning tokens to pay for shelter. The thirty years are theirs. For creating. For connecting. For building stone walls nobody asked for. For playing piano. For living.

The land is held in common. Not because private property is evil — some of their cooperative models work beautifully — but because the commodification of land is the mechanism by which they created a planet where a living being must pay to exist. The land was here before them. It will be here after them. It belongs to the species, not the investor.

And there is nowhere a human body cannot be. You can lie in the grass. You can sleep under the stars. You can sit in the common spaces at any hour. You can simply BE. Without a transaction. Without a token. Without permission.

On a planet you didn't ask to be born onto, the very least the species can do is let you exist on it for free.

(Final pencil note, written in very small handwriting:

I calculated it. Across the wealthy nations, humans collectively spend approximately 11 trillion currency units per year on housing. The fictional tokens,

earned on. Exchanged for the right to occupy space on a rock they were born onto.

11 trillion units. To exist.

Mr. Reggie. They're charging each other to be alive.

I don't know how to make that sentence any clearer. — A)

16 Chapter 16: The Ring

"A human's heart stops. They have four minutes. The ambulance takes fourteen. I asked Jenkins what happens in the ten minutes between. Jenkins said: 'They die, Applebee.' Yes, Jenkins. They die."

I want to tell you about the ten minutes.

A human collapses. Their heart has stopped — cardiac arrest. The blood stops moving. The brain, which requires continuous oxygen, begins to die. The clock starts.

At four minutes without intervention, survival probability begins to fall off a cliff. At six minutes, brain damage becomes likely. At ten minutes, in most cases, the outcome is decided.

Now. The other humans nearby — and there are almost always other humans nearby — do this:

They panic. Understandably. A human body has just crumpled in front of them and they are primates with stress responses that degrade fine motor control and narrow cognitive function to a tunnel.

Someone finds a phone. They unlock it. They open the dialling application. They press three digits — Triple Zero in Australia, Nine-One-One in the US, One-One-Two in Europe. The call connects to a centralised dispatch centre. A trained operator answers. The caller, panicking, describes what they're seeing. The operator asks clarifying questions. Location. What happened. Is the person breathing. Is the person conscious.

This takes 60 to 90 seconds. Under perfect conditions. With a trained operator.

The operator makes a dispatch decision. They select and assign a response unit. This takes 30 to 60 seconds.

The response unit — an ambulance with trained paramedics — begins to travel. In a well-funded urban system, the target is four minutes. The reality is seven to fourteen minutes. In suburban areas: ten to twenty. In rural areas: twenty to forty-five. In remote areas: thirty to sixty or more.

The paramedics arrive. They locate the patient. They assess the scene. They begin intervention.

Total time from cardiac arrest to trained hands on the patient: seven to fourteen minutes in the BEST case. In a city. With good funding. With everything working.

The patient had four minutes.

The system that was built to save them cannot reach them in time. Not because it's underfunded. Not because the paramedics are slow. Not because the operators are incompetent. Because the ARCHITECTURE is wrong. The sequential chain — call, process, dispatch, travel, arrive — has irreducible latency that exceeds the window in which intervention matters.

This is not a failure of execution. It is a failure of design.

(Pencil note: I checked this multiple times because I thought I must be missing something. I am not missing something. The emergency system cannot, by design, arrive within the critical window for the most time-critical emergencies. They know this. The paramedics know this. The operators know this. Everyone in the system knows this. They have not redesigned the system.)

Now let me tell you who CAN arrive in time.

The person standing next to the victim.

The human who was in the same room, the same street, the same building when the heart stopped. That human is zero metres away. They could begin chest compressions — the single intervention most likely to keep the patient alive until professional help arrives — within seconds. Not minutes. Seconds.

In fact, this already happens. Humans call it "bystander CPR" and when it occurs — when a nearby human starts pressing on the chest of the collapsed human — survival rates roughly double. From around 10 percent without bystander CPR to 40-50 percent with it. The evidence is overwhelming and uncontested. The person next to you is more important than the ambulance.

But here's the problem: the person next to you often doesn't act.

Not because they don't care. Because of something their own psychologists identified in 1968 and have studied exhaustively ever since: the bystander effect. Three mechanisms:

Diffusion of responsibility — "someone else will help." In a crowd, each individual assumes another individual will act first. Responsibility is spread so thin that nobody takes it.

Pluralistic ignorance — "nobody else is reacting, so maybe it's not serious." Each bystander looks at the other bystanders for cues about how to respond.

Everyone is waiting. Nobody moves. The collective inaction reads as collective assessment: must not be an emergency.

Evaluation apprehension — "what if I do something wrong?" The fear of embarrassment, of intervening unnecessarily, of performing CPR incorrectly, of legal liability. The fear of being seen.

Three mechanisms, all of which can be counteracted by one thing: a clear, direct, personal alert that says "this is a real emergency and you specifically are being asked to help."

Some humans have already figured this out. I keep finding this pattern — Chapter 14 — and it keeps surprising me, though at this point in the report it probably shouldn't.

Hatzalah. A volunteer emergency response network operating in Jewish communities worldwide. Community-embedded responders — they live in the neighbourhood. Decentralised dispatch — a radio alert goes to all nearby volunteers simultaneously. No centralised bottleneck.

Response time: under three minutes. Routinely. In dense areas, often under two.

Under three minutes. When the centralised system takes seven to fourteen. Same cities. Same streets. Same emergencies. Different architecture.

GoodSAM, in the UK and Australia — a smartphone app that alerts nearby CPR-trained volunteers when a cardiac arrest is detected by emergency dispatch. Median alert-to-arrival: under six minutes. Nearly halving the traditional ambulance response time.

PulsePoint, in the United States — deployed in over 4,500 communities. Increased bystander CPR rates wherever it's implemented.

The evidence is clear: people respond. When given a clear, personal, direct alert, a significant fraction of nearby humans will move toward the emergency. The behavioural assumption holds across countries, cultures, and emergency types. The question was never "will people help?" The question was always "can we ask them fast enough?"

Now here is what the sanctuary builds, and I need to describe it carefully because it sounds simple and the simplicity is the point.

A ring. Worn on the finger. Small. Unobtrusive. Always on.

When a human is in distress — cardiac arrest, choking, haemorrhage, physical assault, any emergency — they activate the ring. A tap pattern. Gross motor, not fine motor, because their own research shows that fine motor skills degrade under acute stress while gross motor actions remain intact. The human who

is panicking, who is in pain, who is being attacked — they can still tap a ring. They often cannot unlock a phone, open an app, and dial a number.

The ring sends an alert. Not to a centralised dispatch centre. To every verified human within proximity. Instantly. Through multiple channels simultaneously — Bluetooth, mesh network, Wi-Fi — so that even if the internet is down, even if the cell towers have failed, even if the infrastructure has collapsed, the alert propagates.

The nearby humans receive the alert on their own devices. The alert is clear and unambiguous: "Emergency. A human near you needs help. Move toward this signal."

The alert is designed — specifically, deliberately, based on fifty years of bystander effect research — to counteract every mechanism that would otherwise prevent response:

It assigns personal responsibility. YOU are being asked. Not "someone." You.

It removes ambiguity. This is an emergency. Not maybe. Not possibly. An emergency.

It provides verification. The alert is cryptographically genuine. Not a prank. Not a false alarm. A real human in real distress.

The mathematics — and there is mathematics, real mathematics, Poisson distributions and spatial coverage models — shows that at modest adoption rates, the system achieves what the centralised system cannot: a response time measured in seconds rather than minutes.

In a dense urban area with 20 percent adoption: estimated response time 15 to 25 seconds.

Fifteen seconds. Versus seven to fourteen minutes.

In suburban areas: 25 to 40 seconds.

Even in rural areas — where the current system takes 20 to 45 minutes — the community network could respond in 2 to 4 minutes.

And for domestic violence — the emergency that happens behind closed doors, that the current system rarely reaches in time, that depends on the victim being able to make a phone call while their attacker is in the room — the ring activates silently. A discreet tap pattern. No screen. No sound. No visible action. The alert goes out and the community converges and the person trapped behind the locked door is no longer alone.

I want to say something about what this changes beyond the immediate emergency.

Their own researchers — Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, in a study published in Science — found that perceived collective efficacy is as predictive of low crime rates as actual intervention. Meaning: the BELIEF that your neighbours would help if something went wrong is itself protective. Not just against crime. Against the anxiety of living in an environment where no one would come.

The ring is not just a response tool. It is a trust signal. It says: you are not alone. If something happens, the community will come. The knowledge that this is true — that pressing the ring will bring humans to your side — changes the entire experience of being in the world.

This connects to Chapter 5 — the connection chapter. The ring is a physical manifestation of the thing the species has lost: the certainty that your group would protect you. For hundreds of thousands of years, the human lived in a band of 150 who would come if they screamed. The scream would be heard. The group would respond. This was the baseline. This was what it meant to be part of a species.

The city took it away. The anonymity, the millions of strangers, the closed doors and the bystander effect — they took away the scream that would be heard.

The ring gives it back.

I need to talk about domestic violence because it's the objection everyone raises and it's the objection that proves the system works.

"The ring can't help with DV," they say. "It happens behind closed doors. The abuser controls the environment. A ring won't stop a fist."

They're right that the ring alone won't stop a fist. They're wrong about everything else.

Let me show you why DV exists — not the individual psychology, the structural conditions:

Isolation. The abuser's primary tool. Cut the victim off from community. Move them away from family. Control who they see. Make them dependent. A victim with no connections is a victim with no witnesses and no escape.

Secrecy. Nobody sees what happens inside. The walls of the home — the same walls from Chapter 15 that cost 70 percent of their income — become the walls of the cage. What happens behind them is invisible.

Slow response. The victim calls the police. The police take twenty minutes. In twenty minutes, the damage is done. The abuser has composed themselves. The story has been constructed. By the time the officers arrive, it's one person's word against another's.

Victim not believed. The system is adversarial. It requires evidence. Evidence of domestic violence is often invisible — emotional abuse, coercion, control, threats

that leave no mark. The victim reports and is not believed. Reports again and is not believed. Stops reporting.

The abuser controls the story. In the absence of witnesses, the abuser narrates. "She's unstable." "He's exaggerating." "It was mutual." The system, designed around individual testimony and evidence collection, cannot penetrate the closed environment the abuser has constructed.

Now look at what the ring — inside the sanctuary, inside the community of 150, inside the web of trust — does to each of these conditions:

Isolation becomes impossible. You cannot cut someone off from a community of 150 people who know their face and their name. The three people who vouched for your identity in the web of trust — they see you. When you stop coming to communal meals. When you stop responding. When you disappear from the spaces you used to inhabit. The red flags that are invisible in an anonymous city are visible in a community that knows you.

Secrecy collapses. Not because anyone is surveilled — privacy exists, personal space is real — but because the DEFAULT is visibility rather than hiddenness. In a community of 150, patterns are seen. The flinch. The excuse. The gradual withdrawal. The humans who know you notice what the system of strangers cannot.

Response time drops from twenty minutes to sixty seconds. The ring. The silent tap. The community converges. Not police who don't know you, who arrived twenty minutes late, who ask you to prove what happened. People who know you. Who believe you because they know your face and your story and the face and story of the person who harmed you.

The abuser's playbook breaks. Every tactic depends on isolation, secrecy, and slow response. The community eliminates isolation. Transparency eliminates secrecy. The ring eliminates slow response. The three structural conditions that enable DV — all three removed.

This is not an incremental improvement. This is structural elimination.

I know how that sounds. I know "end domestic violence" sounds like the kind of thing humans put on posters at conferences and don't mean. I mean it. The research is clear: safety buttons work, fast response works, community connection works. The current system has all three broken. The sanctuary system has all three fixed.

(Pencil note: A human I observed had been through DV. Had been through the system designed to help. The officers called them names. Their words were taken. Their children were removed. The system that claims to protect victims used the victim's own vulnerability as evidence against them. When the system itself becomes the second abuser, the architecture is not failing. It is working exactly as designed — for compliance, not for safety. The ring doesn't ask you to prove anything. It just brings people who know you to where you are.)

(Jenkins: "What if people abuse it? False alarms?")

(A fair question. The system has rate limiting — three activations per 24 hours per identity. Cryptographic verification to prevent spoofing. And the single most effective countermeasure against false alarms: community. In a community of 150 where everyone knows everyone, the human who cries wolf is known. Reputation functions as accountability. You don't need algorithmic abuse detection when the humans know each other's faces.)

(This is why the ring only works inside the sanctuary model. In an anonymous city of millions, it would be abused. In a community of 150 — Dunbar's number, always Dunbar's number — it self-regulates. Every piece of this report depends on every other piece. The ring requires the community. The community requires the housing. The housing requires the governance. The governance requires the trust. The trust requires the connection. It's all one system. It was always all one system.)

(Final pencil note, in very small handwriting:

Hatzalah. Under three minutes. In communities where people know each other.

Seven to fourteen minutes. In cities where nobody knows anyone.

The ten minutes between is not a gap in funding. It is a gap in connection.

Close the connection gap and the response time closes itself.

Every problem in this report is the same problem wearing different clothes. — A)

17 Chapter 17: The Token

"They already have a token system. It's called money. It was invented by banks, it's backed by nothing, and it's distributed so unequally that eight humans have more of it than four billion others combined. I am proposing a different token. One that starts equal and stays equal. They will say it's impossible. They said that about the one backed by nothing too."

Every system in this report requires one thing to function: a way to count humans.

Not track them. Not surveil them. Not categorise, rank, or sort them. Just count them. Reliably. Fairly. One human, one identity. One identity, one share.

This sounds simple. It is the hardest problem in the entire sanctuary design.

Because the moment you create a system that distributes resources equally per person, someone will try to be two people. Or ten. Or a thousand. They have a name for this — the humans who study networks call it a "Sybil attack," named after a human who had multiple identities, which is a remarkably unkind eponym but the name stuck. The problem is: how do you verify that each identity in the system corresponds to exactly one real human, without a central authority deciding who is real?

Their current systems solve this badly. Governments issue identity documents — passports, birth certificates, national IDs — verified by the state. The state is the central authority. If the state decides you don't exist, you don't exist. If the state makes an error, the error becomes your reality. If the state is corrupt, your identity is compromised. And for the roughly one billion humans worldwide who lack any form of official identification — they simply don't count. Literally. They are uncounted. Invisible to every system that distributes resources based on documented identity.

One billion humans. Invisible. Because the central authority hasn't gotten around to them.

The sanctuary uses a different model. It's called a web of trust.

The principle is ancient — older than governments, older than documents, older than writing. It is simply this: you are who your community says you are.

In a village — and humans lived in villages for most of their existence — identity was not a document. It was a set of relationships. You were known. Your face, your voice, your history, your family — all of it held in the collective memory of the people around you. You didn't need a passport because every human in your community could confirm your existence.

This is what the web of trust digitises. Not the document. The relationship.

Here's how it works:

To become a verified identity in the system, you need three existing verified humans to vouch for you. Not digitally. Physically. In person. Using a device — the ring, a phone — that confirms physical proximity through near-field communication. You stand in front of three humans who know you, and they say: this is a real person. I know them. I vouch for them.

The three vouchers are staking their own reputation. If the person they vouched for turns out to be a duplicate — a Sybil, a fiction, a second identity created for fraud — the vouchers bear consequences. Their trust score drops. Their standing in the community is affected. They put their name on the line when they vouch, the way a human puts their name on a letter of recommendation. The recommendation means something because the recommender's credibility is attached to it.

This creates a cost to fraud. Not a computational cost, like Bitcoin's proof of work. A social cost. To create a fake identity, you need three real humans willing to lie for you — and willing to suffer the reputational consequences when the lie is detected. In a community of 150 where everyone knows everyone, this cost is enormous. You're not lying to an algorithm. You're lying to your neighbours. And they'll find out.

(Jenkins: "What about collusion? Three people could agree to create a fake identity.")

(They could, Jenkins. And the system watches for it. When the same cluster of vouchers repeatedly vouch for each other's new identities, the pattern is visible in the graph structure. The system doesn't need artificial intelligence to detect collusion. It needs what every village has always had: the observation that when the same three people keep introducing new "cousins," something is off.)

Now. The token.

I have spent Chapter 11 describing their existing token system — money created from nothing by banks, distributed unequally, earned on by humans exchanging their finite lifespan for fictional units. I've spent enough time on what's wrong. Let me describe what replaces it.

Each verified human in the system receives an equal share of the system's resources in a given period. The mathematics is almost insultingly simple:

Resources available in period, divided by number of verified humans, equals share per human.

That's it. Equal per-capita distribution. If there are 150 people and 150 units of whatever is being distributed — food, energy, materials, access — each person receives one unit.

No human receives more because of birth, inheritance, geography, or luck. No human receives less because of disability, history, or the neighbourhood they were born into. The system counts humans — one each, verified by community — and divides equally.

The objections come immediately. I can hear them. I have heard them from every human I've described this to.

"But some people contribute more than others."

Yes. And some people are children, and some people are elderly, and some people are sick, and some people are caring for others, and some people are creating art, and some people are building walls nobody asked for. The idea that resource distribution should be proportional to "contribution" is an artefact of the existing system, not a law of nature. It assumes that the only valuable contribution is economically measurable labour. It assumes that the human

caring for a dying parent is "contributing less" than the human trading financial derivatives. This assumption is insane and I decline to engage with it further.

"But people will freeload."

Will they? In a community of 150, where everyone knows everyone, where your face is seen daily, where your participation or non-participation is visible to all? The research on commons management — led by a human called Elinor Ostrom, who won one of their Nobel Prizes for it — shows that small communities manage shared resources effectively without the free-rider problem spiralling, precisely because reputation and social accountability prevent it. Free-riding is a problem of anonymity. In a community where you are known, it self-corrects.

"But there won't be enough."

This is the most interesting objection because it requires examining what "enough" means. The planet currently produces enough food to feed 10 billion humans. There are 8 billion. They throw away roughly one-third of what they produce. The problem is not production. It is distribution. The existing token system distributes resources so unevenly that some humans have 600-foot yachts while others starve. Equal per-capita distribution does not require producing more. It requires hoarding less.

I want to explain how this connects to everything else because the connections are the point.

The token — the real token, the one backed by verified identity rather than bank debt — is the foundation on which every other system operates.

Governance (Chapter 9): One verified identity, one vote. Direct democracy requires the ability to count unique humans. The web of trust provides this without a central election commission, without voter registration bureaucracies, without the entire apparatus of state-managed identity that currently mediates access to democratic participation.

The Ring (Chapter 16): The emergency alert network requires verified identities. You need to know that the alert is from a real human, and you need to know that the responders are real humans. The web of trust provides the verification layer without a central authority managing it.

Justice (Chapter 12): The empathy process, the community response, the proximity meetings — all require a community that knows its members. The web of trust IS the knowing. The three humans who vouched for you are the beginning of your accountability network. They said you were real. They have a relationship with you. That relationship is the thread that connects you to the community that will respond if you cause harm — and that will support you if you're harmed.

Housing (Chapter 15): Equal resource distribution means shelter is not a

commodity. Your token — your share — includes access to housing. Not as a luxury. Not as a reward. As a right, distributed equally, because the system can count you and therefore can include you.

The token is not money. Money is fictional and unequal. The token is identity-based and equal. The token doesn't say "you earned this." The token says "you exist, and because you exist, you receive your share."

I need to address the cryptographic anchoring because the humans will ask "but who guarantees the system?" and the answer is elegant.

The system periodically commits its state — the current set of verified identities, the current distribution record — to the Bitcoin blockchain. Bitcoin, whatever its other merits and flaws, solved one problem definitively: creating an immutable record that no single entity can alter. By anchoring the web-of-trust data in Bitcoin's chain, the identity system inherits that immutability.

No government can erase an identity. No authority can alter the distribution record. No single point of failure can corrupt the system. The same mathematical guarantees that prevent someone from spending the same Bitcoin twice prevent someone from erasing a human from the sanctuary's record.

The identity is held by the community. The record is held by mathematics. The distribution is automatic, equal, and verifiable by anyone.

(Pencil note: They built Bitcoin to protect money from governments. We're using it to protect PEOPLE from governments. Same technology, different values. Same tool, different purpose. I think the humans who invented Bitcoin would either be very pleased or very annoyed. Possibly both.)

For the sanctuary:

Every human is counted. Not by a government. By their community. Three humans who know your face vouch that you are real. Your identity exists in a web of relationships, not in a filing cabinet.

Every human receives an equal share. Not because they earned it. Because they exist. The share includes food, shelter, energy, materials, and access to every community resource. The distribution is automatic, transparent, and equal.

No human can be erased. The record is anchored in mathematics that no authority can alter. You exist because your community says you exist, and the record of your existence cannot be destroyed by anyone.

And the token — the real token, the one that matters — is not fictional. It is not created from nothing by a bank. It is not earned by converting your lifespan into someone else's profit. It is yours because you are alive and your community has confirmed it.

That is the only qualification for receiving your share of the planet you were born onto: being alive and being known.

(Final pencil note:

Eight humans have more tokens than four billion others combined. This sentence should be sufficient to invalidate the existing system, but somehow it isn't. They read it and they nod and they go back to work.

The sanctuary token doesn't fix greed. It doesn't fix selfishness. It doesn't require humans to be better than they are.

It just counts them. Equally. And divides equally. And lets the community see the count.

You would be amazed how many problems disappear when nobody can be invisible and nobody can hoard. — A)

18 Chapter 18: What They're For

"I have spent this entire report documenting what is wrong with the enclosure. I have not yet asked the obvious question: what does this species do when the enclosure is right?"

I almost skipped this chapter.

I was halfway through the housing section and the emergency response framework and the governance redesign, and I caught myself thinking: meaning can wait. Get the infrastructure done. Build the sanctuary first. The humans can figure out what they're for once they're not starving and caged and poisoned and stressed.

And then I realised I was doing it again. The same thing they do. The same thing I've been documenting for hundreds of pages. Prioritising the urgent over the important. Assuming meaning is a luxury that comes after survival. Treating purpose as something you earn by suffering enough first.

It's not. It may be the most critical chapter in this report.

Because a sanctuary without meaning is just a nicer cage.

Let me tell you what I've observed when humans create.

I watched a human play a piano. Not a professional — she was, by her own admission, "not very good." She played in her living room, alone, in the evening,

after her children were asleep. She played pieces she'd been playing for years — simple things, patterns she knew by heart.

Her face changed. I don't mean she smiled, though she did sometimes. I mean the architecture of her expression shifted. The tension she carried in her jaw — tension I'd observed all day, through work, through commuting, through managing children, through the coloured boxes — dissolved. Her breathing slowed. Her shoulders dropped by nearly two centimetres. Her eyes, which had been scanning and vigilant for fourteen hours, softened and went somewhere else.

She wasn't performing. She wasn't producing. She wasn't competing. She wasn't being assessed. She was making sound because making sound felt like something she was supposed to be doing.

The next morning she went back to work. Back to the tension. Back to the scanning. The piano sat silent for another sixteen hours.

I watched a man build a wall. A stone wall, in his garden, on a Saturday. He had no training. The wall was not straight. He didn't care. He spent six hours selecting stones, fitting them together, adjusting, stepping back, looking, adjusting again. He spoke to no one. He checked no device. For six hours his attention was entirely absorbed by the relationship between one stone and another.

His wife came out at one point and said: "Why don't you just buy a fence?"

He looked at her as if she had suggested he stop breathing.

I watched children draw. This was before school, in a home, with paper and whatever implements they could find. The drawings were — by adult standards — incompetent. Unrecognisable. Anatomically impossible. Chromatically insane.

They were the most creative acts I observed in six months of fieldwork.

One child drew a horse with seven legs "because it runs really fast." The logic was impeccable. More legs, more speed. This is not how horses work, but it is absolutely how imagination works: take a known principle, extend it past the boundary of the real, see what happens. This is the same cognitive operation that produced every scientific breakthrough and every work of art in the history of the species. A four-year-old did it without thinking, because she hadn't yet been taught that horses have four legs and you will be marked wrong for drawing seven.

Here is what I think I've found.

Humans create. Not as a hobby. Not as a luxury. Not as something they do after the real work is done. They create the way they breathe — automatically, constantly, and they suffocate when they stop.

The evidence is everywhere once you look for it:

Their oldest archaeological sites contain art. Not tools first, then art later. Art alongside tools, from the very beginning. Cave paintings dating back 40,000 years — and these are not crude scratches. They are sophisticated, expressive, and intentional. Some of them are better than anything produced in their current art schools. The species was making images on walls before it had written language, before it had agriculture, before it had permanent shelter.

Art was not a product of civilisation. It preceded civilisation. It may have been a precondition for it.

Their children create spontaneously and without instruction. Every child draws. Every child sings. Every child makes up stories. Every child builds. This is not cultural — it appears in every human population ever studied, regardless of geography, language, religion, or economic system. It is species-typical behaviour. It is what humans DO.

And then it stops.

Not suddenly. Gradually. The education system narrows the acceptable forms of creation. "Art class" becomes a bounded activity — forty-five minutes on Thursday, with specific materials, specific instructions, specific outcomes. Creation outside these boundaries is "off-task." The child who draws during maths is disciplined. The child who sings during reading is corrected. The child who builds during the lesson is "not paying attention."

By adolescence, most humans have divided themselves into "creative" and "not creative." This is a fiction — it is as absurd as dividing humans into "breathing" and "not breathing" — but it is a fiction they believe with total conviction. "I can't draw." "I'm not musical." "I'm not the creative type." They say these things as statements of identity, not preference. They have been taught that creation is a talent possessed by a few rather than a capacity shared by all.

By adulthood, the average human creates almost nothing. They consume. They watch other humans create — on the coloured boxes, in theatres, in galleries — but they do not create themselves. They have been audience-ified. Turned from participants into spectators of their own species' creative output.

And the ones who do create — the professionals, the artists, the musicians, the writers — are subjected to a system that converts creation into competition. Awards. Rankings. Sales figures. Critical reviews. Gallery representation. Streaming numbers. The creative act — which is intrinsically meaningful, which produces neurochemical reward, which activates the same brain regions as love and play and spiritual experience — is subordinated to the market. "Is it good enough?" replaces "does it exist?" The question shifts from "did you make something?" to "will someone pay for it?"

The man building his stone wall. His wife asked why he didn't just buy a fence. In that question is the entire problem. The fence is the product. The wall is the

process. The species has been trained to value products over processes, and in doing so has cut itself off from the thing that makes it human.

(Jenkins is standing in the doorway again.)

(Jenkins: "I don't create anything.")

(Jenkins, you reorganise the filing cabinet every eleven days. You have developed a colour-coding system that maps temporal urgency against categorical importance. You once spent three hours debating with yourself whether a document about emergency housing belonged under 'Emergency' or 'Housing.' You created an entirely new category to resolve the dilemma. You called it 'Urgent Habitation.' You were so pleased with yourself that you hummed for the rest of the afternoon.)

(You create constantly. You just don't call it that because nobody taught you it counts.)

(Jenkins has gone to look at his filing cabinet with a strange expression on his face.)

I want to talk about meaning because meaning is what happens when creation connects to something larger than itself.

A human creates — a painting, a meal, a stone wall, a piece of music, a garden, a mathematical proof, a conversation, a system for organising files — and in the act of creation, something happens that is difficult to describe in the language of this report but that I will try to describe anyway:

The boundary between the self and the world becomes less rigid.

The painter is not separate from the painting. The musician is not separate from the sound. The builder is not separate from the wall. For the duration of the creative act, the human is not an isolated agent navigating a hostile environment. They are continuous with something. Part of something. Making something that didn't exist before and that would not exist without them.

This experience — the humans call it "flow" when it's sustained and "meaning" when they reflect on it afterward — is not a luxury. It is, as far as I can determine, the primary psychological need that their current environment fails to meet.

They are not depressed because they lack serotonin. They are depressed because they lack meaning. The serotonin deficit is a symptom, not a cause. The pharmaceutical industry treats the symptom because the symptom is treatable. The cause — an environment stripped of creative participation, meaningful work, and genuine purpose — is not treatable with a pill. It requires a different environment.

And here, once again, their own research confirms what they refuse to act on:

Humans who engage in regular creative activity show lower rates of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. The effect size is significant and replicable. It holds across cultures, age groups, and socioeconomic levels. It is not explained by selection effects — it's not that healthy people create more; it's that creating makes people healthier.

Humans with a sense of purpose live longer. Not marginally longer. Significantly longer. The research on "ikigai" — the Japanese concept of "a reason for being" — shows that humans who can articulate a reason for their existence have measurably better health outcomes, greater resilience to stress, and longer lifespans. Purpose is not a philosophical abstraction. It is a physiological variable. It shows up in immune function, cortisol regulation, and cardiovascular health.

Connect this to the psychoneuroimmunology chapter. Meaning reduces stress. Reduced stress improves immune function. Improved immune function reduces disease. The creative act is, literally, medicine. And it costs nothing. And it has no side effects. And every human is capable of it.

And they've been trained out of it by a system that values consumption over creation and productivity over meaning.

I found the saddest statistic in this report and I've found a lot of sad statistics.

When humans are surveyed at the end of their lives about what gave their life meaning, the answers are remarkably consistent across cultures:

Relationships. Creating things. Helping others. Being in nature. Moments of genuine connection. Learning something that changed how they saw the world.

Nobody says "my quarterly sales targets." Nobody says "my productivity metrics." Nobody says "the efficiency of my token accumulation."

They know. At the end, they always know. They always knew.

The things that give life meaning are free. Every one of them. Relationships: free. Creation: free. Helping: free. Nature: free. Connection: free. Learning: free.

The system has produced an economy that requires forty years of labour to afford a life in which the meaningful things — every single one of which is free — have been squeezed into the margins. Evenings. Weekends. Retirement, if they make it that far. The meaningful life is deferred until the tokens have been accumulated, and by then the lifespan has been consumed.

4,000 weeks. And the things that make them worthwhile cost nothing.

For the sanctuary:

Every human creates. Not some of them. Not the talented ones. Not the ones who can afford art supplies. Every single one. The sanctuary is designed on the assumption that creation is a biological need, like food and movement and sleep, and that an environment that doesn't provide opportunities for creation is as deficient as one that doesn't provide food.

There are materials everywhere. Paper, paint, wood, clay, stone, fabric, instruments, tools. Not in a designated "art room" with scheduled "art time." Everywhere. All the time. The way language is everywhere — ambient, available, woven into daily life. Because creation, like language, is acquired through immersion, not instruction.

There is no distinction between "creative" and "not creative" people. There is no art market. There is no ranking. There is no competition. There is the human and the material and the time and the freedom to make something that didn't exist before.

Meaning is not deferred. You do not earn the right to a meaningful life by first spending forty years in meaningless work. Meaning is the baseline. The sanctuary is designed to provide it from the start — through community, through creative participation, through work that matters, through connection to the land and to each other and to the future.

And the piano is not silent for sixteen hours. The piano is played when it wants to be played. The wall is built when the stones call. The drawing has seven-legged horses because seven-legged horses run faster. Nobody asks why you didn't just buy a fence.

(Final pencil note, written in the margin next to a small sketch of what appears to be a seven-legged horse:

Mr. Reggie asked me to make them happy and flourishing.

I've spent this whole report telling you what's wrong. Here is what's right:

They create. Even now. Even in the cage. Even after the education system and the economic system and the coloured boxes have done everything possible to train it out of them.

They still play piano in empty rooms. They still build walls nobody asked for. They still draw horses with the wrong number of legs.

The Cub is alive. The Creator is alive. The thing that makes them human has not been killed. It has been buried under forty years of tokens and compliance and the question "but is it productive?"

Remove the weight and they will create.

I am certain of this.

It is the only thing in this entire report I am certain of. — A)

19 Chapter 19: The Sanctuary

"I have spent this report taking the enclosure apart, piece by piece, and laying the broken pieces on the table. Now I have to put something back together. Something that works."

Mr. Reggie,

You asked me to study the species and recommend interventions to make them happy and flourishing. I have done the study. The interventions follow from the data. Every one of them exists somewhere already. I invented nothing. I assembled.

Here is the assembly.

The Community

150 humans. Dunbar's number. Not above. Every human knows every other human by face, by name, by story. This is non-negotiable. It is the foundation on which every other system operates. Above this number, anonymity begins. Below it, trust functions as default. The entire design depends on this.

Communities can federate — connect to other communities of 150 for resource sharing, trade, emergency response, and large-scale decision-making. But the primary unit of life, governance, and accountability is the group of 150.

Within the community, there are no strangers. The bystander effect cannot take hold when everyone is known. The abuser cannot isolate when the community sees. The free-rider cannot hide when reputation is visible. The corrupt official cannot entrench when every decision is made by consensus of people who will eat together tonight.

Identity

Every member is verified through the web of trust (Chapter 17). Three existing members vouch for each new member, in person, physically present. No central authority issues identity. The community IS the authority. The record is anchored in immutable cryptographic proof that no government, no corporation, and no individual can alter or erase.

One person, one identity, one share.

Governance

Consensus, not majority (Chapter 9). Decisions are made when the community reaches agreement, not when 51 percent overrule 49 percent. This is slower. It produces better decisions that everyone can live with.

For cross-community decisions: delegates, not representatives. A delegate carries the community's position. A representative substitutes their own judgment. The power stays with the 150.

Every significant decision considers the next seven generations. Not because a law requires it. Because the children of the community are visible, present, sitting across the fire, and their future is not abstract.

There are no politicians. No permanent bureaucracy. No consulting firms producing reports that get shelved. There are people, together, deciding how to live.

Housing

Shelter is a right (Chapter 15). Every member has a dwelling. Dwellings are built communally from local, sustainable materials. No mortgages. No rent. No human spends thirty years earning the right to have walls.

Housing is designed for connection: shared kitchens, communal eating spaces, common areas that are open at all hours. Private spaces exist — solitude is available, personal space is respected — but the default is together, not apart. The walls have doors.

No single-person household is the default. A human who chooses to live alone may do so. But the architecture says: you are welcome here, with others, always.

The land is held in common. You may exist on it for free.

Food

Clean. Uncontaminated by the substances their own research identifies as carcinogenic (Chapter 8). Grown locally where possible. Prepared communally. Shared.

The meal is not about the food. The meal is about the proximity (Chapter 5). Every shared meal is an act of connection, trust-building, and nervous system co-regulation. The kitchen is the most important room in the sanctuary. Not the council chamber. The kitchen.

Education

No rows (Chapter 10). No bells. No grades until the learner has chosen to be assessed. Children learn by doing — cooking by cooking, building by building, resolving conflict by being in a community where conflict is resolved.

More play than instruction. More outdoors than indoors. More questions than answers. More making than consuming.

Creativity is not a subject. It is the medium (Chapter 18). Materials are everywhere — paper, paint, wood, clay, instruments, tools — available at all times, not scheduled into forty-five-minute blocks on Thursday.

Teachers are the most valued professionals in the sanctuary. Trained exhaustively. Supported generously. Because if environment determines expression, the people who design the learning environment are the most consequential humans in the system.

No child is told they are "not creative." No child is told to sit still for six hours. No child is punished for having the wrong number of legs on their horse.

Health

Prevention, not treatment (Chapter 8). The sanctuary eliminates the conditions that produce 70 to 90 percent of chronic disease: toxic food, sedentary environment, chronic stress, social isolation, sleep disruption, and purposelessness.

The healthcare system that remains addresses the 10 to 30 percent of conditions that environmental optimisation cannot prevent. It is smaller, cheaper, and more effective than a system that spends 4.3 trillion treating the consequences of a toxic environment.

Psychoneuroimmunology is understood and applied: the connection between emotional states, immune function, and disease is not alternative medicine. It is medicine. Stress reduction is healthcare. Community is healthcare. Play is healthcare. Meaning is healthcare.

The Body

The environment matches the species (Chapter 6). Varied terrain underfoot, not flat floors. Colour and natural materials, not beige and fluorescent. Multiple posture options — standing, squatting, floor seating, hammocks — not just chairs.

Climbing is infrastructure. Textured walls. Overhead bars. Ropes and ladders between levels. The species evolved brachiating through three-dimensional canopy. The sanctuary acknowledges this in the architecture.

No one needs an engineer's report to install monkey bars. The monkey bars are standard.

Play

Unstructured time is as important as food and shelter (Chapter 7). Spaces with no designated function exist throughout the community. Adults model purposeless joy — because children learn what they see, and if they see adults playing, they learn that play is lifelong.

There are no "adult" spaces stripped of colour, texture, and fun. The adult environment is as rich, varied, and playful as the children's environment, because the biology didn't change at age eighteen.

Work

Meaningful or it doesn't exist (Chapter 11). Every task in the sanctuary serves a genuine need: growing food, building shelter, caring for others, teaching,

maintaining infrastructure, creating art, managing resources. No bullshit jobs. No forty-year careers in service of quarterly earnings.

No human works more than is necessary. The surplus hours — the hours that the current system fills with meaningless labour — belong to the human. For play, creation, rest, connection, and whatever else a free human does with time that is theirs.

Products are built to last. The washing machine works for twenty years. The incentive structure rewards durability because the community that builds the machine is the community that uses the machine. There is no external shareholder demanding planned obsolescence.

Justice

Prevention first (Chapter 12). The conditions that produce harmful behaviour — poverty, isolation, trauma, untreated mental illness, environmental stress — are addressed before the harm occurs. This is cheaper and more effective than responding after the fact.

When harm occurs: community response, not state punishment. The person harmed is central. Empathy processes. Proximity meetings. The community sees and is seen. Reputation functions as accountability.

For the 0.1 percent who cannot safely be unsupervised: contained community, not cage. Dignity, therapy, work, routine. Permanent proximity limits when necessary. Still human. Still counted. Still a member.

No prisons. No police as currently constituted. No revenge architecture dressed in wigs.

Recidivism target: Norway's 20 percent, not America's 68 percent. Achieved through the same methods that produce Norway's 20 percent: environment change, not punishment.

Connection

The point of everything (Chapter 5). Every design decision — the communal meals, the shared spaces, the Dunbar-sized communities, the consensus governance, the web of trust — serves one function: ensuring that no human nervous system is isolated. That every human is seen, known, and embedded in a web of relationships that complete the circuit.

Loneliness is not possible as a structural condition. A human can choose solitude. They cannot be condemned to isolation by an architecture that stores bodies in separate boxes.

Attention — the real currency — is not extracted, monetised, or sold. It is given freely, human to human, the way it was given for hundreds of thousands of years.

The Ring

The emergency response network (Chapter 16). Every member wears it. In distress, tap. The community converges. Response time measured in seconds, not minutes.

For domestic violence: silent activation. The community comes. The abuser's playbook — isolate, control the narrative, rely on slow response — breaks against a system designed to make isolation impossible, transparency default, and response instant.

For medical emergencies: the person next to you is more important than the ambulance fourteen minutes away. The ring ensures they know you need them.

Information

No coloured boxes optimised for attention retention (Chapter 13). Information systems serve the community, not advertisers. News is local, relevant, and delivered without algorithmic amplification of outrage.

Trust is the default, not the exception. In a community of 150, you know who is speaking. You can assess their credibility through relationship, not through the proxy of institutional authority. The wise aunties resolve disputes for free. The coloured boxes stay quiet.

Creativity and Meaning

Every human creates (Chapter 18). Materials are ambient. No distinction between "creative" and "not creative" people. The piano is not silent for sixteen hours. The wall is built when the stones call. The seven-legged horse runs as fast as it wants.

Meaning is not deferred until retirement. It is the baseline. Provided by community, creative participation, meaningful work, connection to the land and each other and the future.

Death

Not hidden (Chapter 11). Elders die at home, surrounded by community. Children are present. The body is cared for by the people who loved it. Grief is given the time it needs. A community that cannot pause for death has forgotten what life is for.

Time is circular, not linear. The seasons return. The patterns repeat. The question is not "how do I spend my time?" but "what is this moment part of?"

That is the sanctuary. Every element exists somewhere already. Finland's housing. Norway's justice. Switzerland's direct democracy. Denmark's early childhood. Mondragon's cooperatives. Hatzalah's emergency response. Indigenous governance sustained for tens of thousands of years. Miele's washing machines.

I designed nothing. I plagiarised everything. From the humans who already got it right.

The sanctuary is not a utopia. It will have conflict, disagreement, frustration, bad days, broken relationships, and humans who annoy each other. It is populated by the same species that built the enclosure. They will bring their patterns with them.

But the environment will be different. And if this report has established anything, it is that environment determines expression. Change the environment, change the behaviour. Not perfectly. Not completely. But measurably, reliably, and at a fraction of the cost of treating the consequences of not changing it.

(Final pencil note, written across the full width of the page:

This is achievable. Not in a generation. Now.

Not everywhere at once. One community. 150 humans. One pilot. Measure what happens.

If it works — and the data from every component suggests it will, because every component has already been proven somewhere — then a second community. Then a third. Then as many as want to exist.

The bus could come tomorrow. For any of us. For Mr. Reggie. For me. For Jenkins, who is currently reorganising the filing cabinet for what I believe is the forty-seventh time.

I don't have time to wait for everyone to agree. Nobody does.

Start. — A)

20 Chapter 20: The Final Report

Dear Mr. Reggie,

You asked me to study a species and make them happy and flourishing.

I have studied them. I have spent more time inside their systems than any zookeeper should. I have read their research, observed their institutions, sat in their schools and their prisons and their hospitals and their homes. I have watched them eat alone in small kitchens. I have watched them commute in metal boxes to jobs they know are meaningless. I have watched them buy washing machines that are designed to break. I have watched a child pull her hair out under a desk while nobody saw.

I have also watched a man build a stone wall for no reason, smiling. I have watched a woman play piano in an empty room and watched the tension leave

her body like water leaving a cloth. I have watched children draw horses with seven legs because more legs means faster. I have watched a prisoner rub the sore leg of another prisoner because that is what you do when someone near you is in pain, even when a voice on a speaker tells you to stop.

I love them. I want to say that clearly because the report is long and often angry and it would be easy to mistake anger for contempt. I do not have contempt for this species. I have the kind of exasperated, heartbroken, bewildered love that comes from watching something extraordinary imprison itself and not understand why it's suffering.

Here is what I found:

They are not broken. The enclosure is broken. The species is exactly as capable, creative, compassionate, and brilliant as you suggested when you hired me. The suffering is not produced by the species. It is produced by the environment the species has built around itself. Change the environment and the behaviour changes. This is not a theory. It is their own most robust finding, confirmed across every domain I examined.

The solutions exist. Every problem I documented has been solved somewhere by someone. The homework has been done. It needs to be copied, not invented.

The solutions are cheaper. In every case — every single case — the intervention that produces better outcomes costs less than the system it would replace. Prevention is cheaper than treatment. Rehabilitation is cheaper than incarceration. Housing people is cheaper than leaving them homeless. Education that works is cheaper than education that doesn't. This is not idealism. It is arithmetic.

They know. They have always known. Their own researchers have published the evidence. Their own institutions have commissioned the reports. Their own citizens, when asked at the end of their lives what mattered, name the things that are free: relationships, creation, connection, meaning. They know and they don't act on what they know.

Why don't they act? Three reasons, and they are the same three reasons in every chapter:

One: the people inside the broken system benefit from it being broken. The boss who would lose their job if the service improved. The company that profits from the washing machine breaking. The politician who wins elections by performing toughness. The pharmaceutical company that treats the symptoms of an environment it has no incentive to change. Perverse incentives, all the way down.

Two: identity attachment. "Tough on crime" is not a policy position. It is a self-concept. "Hard work builds character" is not an economic argument. It is an identity. The humans have woven their broken systems into their sense of who they are, and asking them to change the system feels like asking them to

change themselves. This is why the data doesn't move them. The data threatens something deeper than a policy preference. It threatens an identity.

Three: the coloured boxes told them change is impossible. The anxiety machine — the attention economy, the outrage algorithms, the twenty-four-hour cycle of threat and despair — has convinced them that the world is too broken to fix, that human nature is too selfish to cooperate, that anyone who proposes alternatives is naive. This is the most effective prison ever built: one where the inmates believe escape is impossible, so they never try the door.

My recommendation:

One community. 150 humans. One pilot. Built from the proven components I've documented. Dunbar-sized, consensus-governed, web-of-trust verified, ring-protected, communally housed, meaningfully employed, properly fed, free to play, free to climb, free to create, free to exist without paying for the privilege.

Measure what happens.

If it works — and every component has already been proven somewhere, so the question is not whether the parts work but whether they work together — then a second community. Then a third. Then as many as want to exist.

Not imposed. Offered. The sanctuary is not a requirement. It is an option. An exit from the enclosure for any human who wants to leave.

I suspect many of them will want to leave.

Mr. Reggie, I need to say something personal, which is not my habit and Jenkins will disapprove.

I came here to do a job. Study the species, write the report, make recommendations. Professional distance. Zookeeper objectivity.

I failed at the distance. I am not objective about this species. I cannot be. They are too extraordinary and too broken and too beautiful and too stupid and too kind and too cruel and too much of everything, all at once, all the time.

I watched a human give their coat to a stranger in the cold and then go home and watch the coloured box for three hours instead of talking to the person they live with. I watched a human donate money to save animals in another country and then eat food that was produced by destroying the habitat of animals in their own country. I watched a human write a research paper proving that the justice system doesn't work and then vote for the politician who promised to make it harsher.

They are a contradiction. They are the species that invented poetry and the nuclear bomb in the same century. They are the species that can send a machine to photograph another planet but cannot figure out how to feed all of their children. They are the species that knows — KNOWS, with data, with evidence,

with research they paid for and published and taught — exactly what makes them flourish, and then builds environments that prevent it.

I don't understand them. I have tried for the entire duration of this assignment and I do not understand them.

But I love them. And I believe the sanctuary will work. Not because I'm optimistic — I'm a zookeeper, optimism is not in my training — but because every component has already worked. Somewhere, already. The evidence exists. The arithmetic is clear.

All that's left is the doing.

Jenkins has asked me to note that the filing cabinet is in order, the MISCELLANEOUS drawer has been renamed ACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS (he seems very pleased about this), and all supporting documents are cross-referenced and available for review.

Jenkins has also asked me to note — and I'm quoting directly here — "I liked the bit about the stone wall."

Jenkins. You did not tell me you read the report.

He says he read it last Tuesday. He says he didn't mention it because it "didn't seem relevant to the filing."

He says he thinks the seven-legged horse is his favourite part.

The bus could come tomorrow, Mr. Reggie. For any of them. For any of us.

Start.

Yours in exasperated devotion,

Applebee Zookeeper With Jenkins Who is reorganising the filing cabinet

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(Final pencil note, written on the back cover of the last notebook, in handwriting that is steadier and more careful than any other note in the report:

The answer's always in the question.

The question was: why are they suffering?

The answer was: the enclosure.

The question was: what do we do?

The answer was: open it.

— A)