

A black and white photograph of a dark, industrial interior. The scene is characterized by heavy concrete beams and a high ceiling. Light enters from above, creating strong highlights and deep shadows. In the foreground, a single, simple metal chair sits on a light-colored floor. In the background, there is a corrugated metal structure, possibly a door or a partition, and some indistinct shapes that could be equipment or debris. The overall mood is somber and gritty.

# THE OUTCAST HOTEL

A STORY OF LIVING  
ON THE RUN AND  
LIBERATION

WRITTEN BY  
KEN BUCKLER

# The Outcast Hotel

## A Story of Living on the Run and Liberation

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# Legal

This is a work of fiction. While this work may use real life locations and government agencies, or variations thereof, all names, characters, business, events and incidents are the products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental, other than reference of certain historical events.

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# One

“The battle against the devil, which is the principal task of Saint Michael the Archangel, is still being fought today, because the devil is still alive and active in the world.” -Pope John Paul II

## The Bloodhound

It was a cloudy, warm day in May, and the clocks were striking fourteen. Kevin Kelly Baker, his chin high as he walked wearing a rather loose fitting jacket, quietly slipped through the streets toward his home in Marymore. This was one of the provinces established in Ameriania after the third world war. It was quite a sight to behold, spanning from the Chesapeake Bay to the Appalachian Mountains, from the Potomac River to the Susquehanna River. Traditionally, Marymore had always been extremely clean and well maintained, although the outer parts seemed to find themselves always falling into shambles and disarray.

Kevin lived near the southwest part of Marymore, on the edge of Beltington, a part of the province which was severely damaged during the third world war and never really rebuilt. Traveling into Beltington, while not illegal as there are no laws in Ameriania, is generally frowned upon by the Party and could be met with strict punishment. Nevertheless, Kevin was always curious about Beltington, and as he climbed the steps to his apartment he pondered if Mother would really know if he strayed across the broken concrete into Beltington just to explore. After all, the tracking satellites hadn't worked for decades and no new ones could be launched, due to the intentional scattering of debris in orbit during the third world war to disrupt global communications. It was a brutal war, as the world was divided in two - Ameriania in the western hemisphere of the world, and Eurasiania in the eastern hemisphere.

Gazing out upon the remnants of Beltington, Kevin could see the old belt road which once separated Beltington from the rest of Marymore. The landscape was a mix of dilapidated buildings and impact craters. It's hard to believe that only thirty years ago, shortly before Kevin was born, that Beltington was once a bustling city with beautiful buildings, cherry blossom trees, and supposedly a collection of knowledge in a grand library filled with physical books, unrestricted for usage without prior approval from the Party to read. Little was actually known about Beltington, as all history relating to its past and its people were destroyed along with many of the buildings in Beltington by Eurasiania at the start of the third world war, completely unprovoked in a surprise attack. Eurasiania has always been the aggressor in world wars, and Amerania has always triumphed, but sometimes at great loss of life and property. As a boy, Kevin often dreamed of exploring the remnants of Beltington but Mother never allowed it for his own safety. This of course was not Kevin's biological mother, but a reference to the maternal caring of the Party. "Mother knows best" was a common catchphrase used in safety awareness posters, especially those related to mandatory yearly vaccinations.

Kevin settled into his desk and booted up his computer to logon to the Amerinet. Using his fingerprint for verification, Kevin was granted full privileges to bypass any hatethink filtering or other security mechanisms, so that he could conduct his work as a Bloodhound - an elite group of cyber experts charged with tracking down poldis fugitives, also known as political dissidents. With the aid of the Fugitive Analytical and TecHnical Extreme Intelligence, FATHER for short, he would build a predictive mental profile of fugitives to not only predict their actions while on the run, but also determine the best means of apprehending them. Kevin worked hand-in-hand with the Bluelines, the enforcement arm of the Party, who were dispatched and guided by the Bloodhounds.

All electronic devices were required to wirelessly connect to Amerinet, for the protection of the people. Father and other artificial intelligence programs like it would constantly monitor the

Amerinet for hatethink, including heuristically generated alerts based upon speech overheard by those devices, which were all required to have microphones and speakers to allow instant interaction between the people and Mother, with larger devices also requiring a video camera. Mother was always listening, always watching, and would immediately warn someone when their words or actions were not in line with the good of society, giving them an opportunity to correct themselves before involving the Bloodhounds and the Bluelines.

There was no money in Amerania. All transactions were based upon a social credit system, in which those who stayed in line with the wishes of the Party would find themselves living a life of luxury, while those who found themselves repeatedly corrected by Mother would find themselves living with only the bare necessities. This system worked well, and had eliminated poverty, homelessness, and hunger. Mother only expected in return that you perform the job assigned to you, based upon your standardized career aptitude education and testing, which were conducted throughout your education to determine where you would best be able to help the Party and work towards the common good of all. Personal desires were irrelevant, career goals and aspirations had been eliminated. The job you were assigned was the one you were best suited for, and you could not possibly succeed at any other job. Those who refused to work their assigned jobs would find themselves with a negative social credit score, preventing them from acquiring any goods or services until they have worked at their assigned job for at least one day. Mother knows best, and would be very forgiving as long as you complied with her instructions.

Anyone who defied Mother and refused to self-correct was immediately labeled as a poldis citizen and required to attend re-education camp, known as recamp, for a period in accordance with the severity of their hatethink. Those who refused to self-report to recamp were assigned a Bloodhound, whose job it was to convince the poldis citizen to report to the recamp or guide Bluelines in their apprehension. Now it's important to note that recamp was

not a prison, and the Bluelines are not police officers. The role of laws, police officers had been eliminated in the late 2030's, replaced with a system of rehabilitation and guidance working towards the common good as determined by Mother. Poldis citizens were considered mentally troubled, and Bluelines were civilian mental healthcare professionals authorized by Mother to restrain and detain any poldis citizen who was a danger to themselves and others. Through this revolutionary approach, all crime had been eliminated, so there was no longer any need for judges or prisons either, although many prisons were converted to recamps and refitted with state-of-the-art mental health adjustment facilities.

As Kevin turned on his computer, Mother reminded him in a soft, feminine voice that he was only five minutes early logging on for his scheduled shift, and that he should endeavor to log on at least fifteen minutes early to ensure maximum productivity during his scheduled working hours. He began to sort through the previous shift's reports of successful and failed attempts to convince poldis citizens to report to recamps.

"Five successful reports, one detained, and one evaded" Kevin muttered to himself as he read the summaries, "looks like this is going to be a quiet week."

Kevin had been assigned the evaded poldis citizen by Father, and was required to make contact with the person if possible, guide Bluelines to the person's location if needed.

He decided at this point that it was time to start brewing some coffee. After all, caffeine sharpens the mind. As he went to make his instant coffee, he realized that his supply had not been ordered yet, and he only had enough for one cup left. Kevin started the brewing process, then asked Mother to order more.

"Mother, order more coffee" Kevin spoke out loud. Not only had Mother been programmed to guide citizens on proper behavior, but she was also a trusted assistant, providing access to delivery orders, information, and more by simply speaking her name.

"Would you like to try the new reduced caffeine content brand, EcoloSave? It's friendlier to the environment, and contains only



twenty percent reduced caffeine content” asked Mother, anxiously awaiting Kevin’s response.

“Regular coffee please,” responded Kevin.

“Are you sure you want to order regular coffee? EcoloSave coffee is friendlier to the environment, and will earn you more social credit towards that new luxury bedsheet set you were browsing yesterday. You really should switch to EcoloSave, after all, Mother knows best.”

“Well, I do want to earn enough social credit so I can get more comfortable bed sheets. Alright Mother, go ahead and order the EcoloSave brand” said Kevin.

“Order placed. By the way, did you know that I can provide anonymous statistics on how many people nearby have also purchased EcoloSave coffee? Right now fifteen of your neighbors have also done the right thing by switching. Thank you for helping save the environment!”

Pretending to care about the information Mother just told him, Kevin smiled and nodded to avoid losing social credit score, then began reviewing the poldis citizen’s case file.

*CASE FILE: Jeffrey Thomas Rider*

*DOB: 4/5/2037*

*AGE: 27*

*NOTES: Subject has visited recamp multiple times but continues to relapse. Anti-Party statements have been made to friends and family, some of whom have failed to report within a timely manner and sent to recamp accordingly. Suspect is a “conspiracy theorist” and believes that Mother does not have his best interests in mind. Subject is single, and has no children.*

*Anti-Party statements include:*

*“Our history wasn’t destroyed in the war, it was erased by the Party.”*

*“Only the Inner Party live a life of luxury, and Outer Party members are merely teased with it to motivate us to stay in line and continue working.”*

*“Recamp is still a prison just under a different name.”*

Kevin was very saddened to read these anti-Party statements, realizing that Jeffrey was clearly in need of help. He continued reading the case file to determine what course of action Father had recommended.

*ACTION REQUIRED: Subject must attend a mandatory twelve month recamp session. This session can be reduced to eight months if the subject willingly complies.*

Kevin started his search for Jeffrey. Obviously Jeffrey had already destroyed his cellular phone, but by following the direction the phone was travelling when Jeffrey destroyed it, Kevin can determine Jeffrey's likely direction, and possibly destination.

"Father, cross-correlate Jeffrey's last calculated movement and estimated distance traveled with any known friends or family members."

"Processing," stated Father in a cold, harsh male voice, "Three potential matches found."

Father listed on the screen the names and addresses of Kevin's friends and family who matched the search criteria, as well as the last time they were in close proximity to each other, and how often they talk online or in person. All of this information was gathered through meta-data of their cellular phones, and the primary means of tracking fugitive poldis citizens.

Kevin looked at the list and thought for a moment. "Aunt, last seen two years ago, coworker last seen two weeks ago, and an ex-girlfriend who was last seen six years ago," Kevin stated.

"Father, do you have any details on how Jeffrey and his ex-girlfriend parted ways?" Kevin asked.

"Processing," stated Father, "retrieving deleted social media posts."

Father then displayed on the screen a deleted video from six years ago showing a rather ugly shouting match between Jeffrey and his ex-girlfriend, in which she accuses him of being an "anti-progressive" who doesn't believe in the Party's ultimate goal of Utopia.

"Well, I don't think he'd go to her for help," said Kevin, "let's

take a look at the Aunt. Father, pull up the case file for Kevin's aunt."

Father then displayed on the screen a mostly empty case file on Kevin's aunt, Cynthia Sue Rider, who had been sent to recamp ten years ago for six months, with no repeat offenses. Cynthia lived by herself in a small farmhouse on the outskirts of Marymore. It was a pre-war house, so Mother wasn't present in every room. An ideal hiding spot for someone like Jeffrey. Kevin also noted that Cynthia had been on extended work at a nearby farm to help address a crop failure, so her house would be empty.

"Father, show me the last movement detected at Cynthia's house," Kevin requested, to which Father quickly acknowledged.

Displayed on the screen was a view of Cynthia's doorbell camera, briefly glimpsing a hooded figure passing by the corner of the screen attempting to stay out of view.

"That's it. That's where Jeffrey is hiding," Kevin exclaimed. "Father, are there any internal live views of Cynthia's house?"

"There are two internal views available, including television and refrigerator," replied Father, "however it appears that the refrigerator has been offline for several days, and likely all of the food has spoiled."

"Father, what is the probability that Jeffrey will willingly report to recamp?" asked Kevin.

"Current behavior models estimate a 32.4% chance of Jeffrey willingly going to recamp unescorted, and a 44.1% chance of peacefully accompanying a Blueline escort. Would you like me to go ahead and dispatch the Blueline team to that location?"

"Yes please," Kevin responded. "Please let me know when the Bluelines have surrounded the building and I'll begin the negotiation process."

Kevin then rose from his desk and retrieved his cup of coffee. He stood on his balcony overlooking Beltington, and pondered for a moment as he believed he saw something faintly moving in the distance. He had been taught from all of his life that Beltington was a radioactive wasteland, and nothing could survive there for very

long. Perhaps a wild animal had accidentally wandered too close, and would soon die.

Just as he squinted to try and get a bit better look, Father announced that they were ready to begin.

“Blueline team is in place and awaiting your instruction,” stated Father.

“Father, turn on Cynthia’s television and put me on screen, so Jeffrey can see me,” Kevin requested, then started speaking to the empty room on his computer monitor.

“Jeffrey, it’s over. We know you’re there. If you cooperate and come willingly to recamp, we can reduce your rehabilitation to only eight months instead of twelve.”

The room on the monitor sat empty, motionless, with no sign of life. Kevin started to ponder if perhaps Jeffrey had already left and moved on to another hiding location. However, wanting to make sure, Kevin baited Jeffrey into showing himself. “Jeffrey, if you come willingly we’ll reduce your aunt Cynthia’s recamp time as well for helping you.”

After a brief pause, a distant voice is heard from a hallway beyond the living room. “She didn’t have anything to do with this.”

Kevin signaled the Blueline team to standby for breach, as he had confirmed Jeffrey was inside. He then started talking to Jeffrey to attempt to calm him down before the Blueline team moved in.

“Jeffrey, I want to believe you, and if you come out now you’ll be able to tell your side of the story. Your aunt Cynthia might not even require recamp if her story matches yours. I just got word that the Blueline team picked her up a few moments ago, and she’s denying everything,” stated Kevin.

Of course, the Bluelines had not picked up Cynthia, and she had no idea what was even happening at her house. Cynthia was miles away at another farm, and hadn’t been home in quite some time. This was merely a negotiation technique utilized by the Bloodhounds to throw off their target subjects - use familiar and family ties to coerce the subject into compliance.

“You don’t understand,” said Jeffrey, “they aren’t going to let

me walk away from here.”

“Why do you say that?” asked Kevin.

Slowly, Jeffrey emerged from the hallway holding a large rolled up piece of paper. The paper was clearly very old, and yellowed from age. This fragile document was quite tattered around the edges, and was starting to fall apart.

“Jeffrey, I’m sure whatever you wrote, they can teach you at recamp why you were misinformed,” said Kevin, “You’re not well Jeffrey, your mind is playing tricks on you.”

Suddenly, Mother chimed in, “There’s a fireplace behind you Jeffrey, if you burn the document now and surrender you can still walk out of this.”

“Mother knows best, Jeffrey,” stated Kevin, who was a bit surprised that Mother broke protocol and interrupted the negotiation. “Let’s end this peacefully.”

“No, I know I’m not going to survive this after what I’ve seen. You’re lying to me!” exclaimed Jeffrey as he started to unroll the piece of paper. “You’ve always been lying to me! Lying to everyone!”

As Jeffrey unrolled the piece of paper, with the very top apparently torn away, Kevin saw written in a very faded ink “A Declaration by the Representatives of the ...”. Then the video feed went dead.

“Father, what happened?” asked Kevin, puzzled by the sudden loss of video.

Father replied, “The situation has been resolved peacefully, and the Blueline team is escorting the subject to recamp. This case file has been closed as complete. Please proceed to your next case file.”

Kevin was rather confused, wondering about the piece of paper which Jeffrey was holding. That word was unfamiliar to him, “representatives”.

“Mother, what does representatives mean?” inquired Kevin.

Mother paused for a moment without answer, which was rather unusual as her responses are normally extremely quick. Then finally, after a long awkward silence, Mother responded,

“Representatives is an oldspeak term for revolutionary or rebellion. Inquiries on this topic are restricted. As such, please report to recamp tomorrow at 7 am for a four hour outpatient therapy session. This has clearly been a traumatic case for you, so please take the rest of the day off to relax. I’ve queued up the Party dedication song to Social Justice to help you unwind.”

Mother then began playing a classical tune with lyrics dedicated to the glory of the Party, and how the common good outweighs the needs and desires of the individual. A soothing melody, with very patriotic words.

Kevin laid down to relax on his basic bedsheets, which were only slightly comfortable, and found himself questioning why the feed was cut, and what truly happened to Jeffrey. “Best not dwell on it too much” he thought to himself, as he tossed and turned a bit wishing that his bedsheets were the luxury sheets he saw on Amerinet a few nights before. “Just a few more social credits between work performance and social justice cause support, and I’ll finally be able to get those bedsheets.”

Before going to sleep, Kevin took his phone and wrote a beautiful post on social media about the importance of protecting endangered animals from straying into the radioactive zone of Beltington, and how he was looking to join a volunteer organization to help repair the fence to keep animals from entering the zone. The fence had been deemed low priority as a work task by Mother, as it served no defense or national production purpose, but those who believed strongly in the cause could use their own leisure time to instead work on social justice causes, earning additional social credit points. Even simply talking about social justice causes could earn social credit points, and Kevin received a notification that he had earned half a point due to his continued posts on the matter. “Your social media posts are making a difference!” exclaimed the notification, informing him that 26 nearby people just like him had promoted enough social justice causes to boost their scores to 725, which just so happened to be the score required to obtain the luxury bedsheets.

Just as he was falling asleep, his cellular phone began ringing an alarm with an Amber Alert. A child had been kidnapped by her non-custodial father, and the Bluelines were desperately trying to track the vehicle of the kidnapper. It was an unregistered truck likely built using parts from the Beltington wasteland, from before Mother installed tracking locators in all vehicles for everyone's safety.

Kevin got out of bed and looked out his window for the vehicle as required by Mother. Not seeing it, he spoke, "Mother, I don't see the vehicle from my location looking southwest."

Mother thanked him, and he laid back down, hoping that the Bluelines would find that poor kidnapped child before the radiation from the unregistered vehicle does permanent damage.

The next morning, Kevin turned on the news before getting ready to head to his recamp session.

"In local news, the Bluelines announced they successfully recovered the kidnapped child from yesterday at the Rider farm. Unfortunately the kidnapper, Jeffrey Rider, barricaded himself inside the farmhouse and set it ablaze. Rider did not survive the fire." The newscast then switched to an interview of one of Jeffrey Rider's former coworkers, speaking how they never expected this of him, and how something you "just don't know people"

Kevin paused for a moment, alarmed at what he just heard. He clearly remembered the Jeffrey Rider case from the day before. What did this mean?

Still confused and bewildered, Kevin got dressed and made his way to the bus stop, where he got a ride to the nearest recamp facility.

Upon arrival, Kevin changed into the recamp facility's standard patient attire. All patients, even outpatients, were required to wear exactly the same uniform to stress the importance of the many over one individual. They were then escorted to group roundtable sessions where thought exercises were performed to help clear their mind and focus on the good of the Party and the ultimate goal of building Utopia.

*Chapter One continues in the full version of this book...*

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