

### Earth 3.0

“What a spectacular sunrise,” Sam observed while standing in the living room, sipping his morning coffee. The dark gray outline of the Olympic Mountains silhouetted against the early light shining through the third-floor window of the newly purchased West Seattle condominium. Their building was located along a street overlooking Alki Beach with views to the west and north.

The couple from Georgia had almost finished unpacking after moving to the Pacific Northwest two days prior. Atlanta had been their home until Sam accepted a civil engineering position with Community Development Visions, an Amazon company that reclaimed legacy urban development that has lost economic value. Their current project was Northgate Station, one of those old-school shopping malls in north Seattle that have been closed for years. Ellen worked from home as a computer programmer for Verizon, so the transition to the West Coast did not interrupt her professional life.

“Wait, what did you say about the sunrise?” Ellen asked from the open-design kitchen where she was pouring coffee.

“Oh, I was just saying how spectacular the view is of the sun rising over the Olympic Mountains,” Sam replied as he walked to the kitchen coffeemaker with his half-full mug to join his wife.

Ellen looked at the sunrise in the west and then turned to look out the kitchen window, which faced north to Elliott Bay. “We are in West Seattle, which means downtown Seattle is to the east,” she advised. Facing the kitchen window, Ellen could see the Space Needle in the distance, slightly to her right. “Look at the Space Needle standing in the sunshine,” she said, pointing north.

Sam put his cup on the counter and followed his wife’s direction. “We must not have been paying attention before,” Sam said as he located the Space Needle.

Ellen opened her tablet and found the digital city map given to them by the same Realtor who neglected to tell them about the rain in Seattle when they started searching for places to live. She oriented the map in the direction of Elliott Bay to the north. “Something is wrong,” she announced as she looked up from the map to her left at the sun now shining above the Olympic Peninsula, announcing a new day in June.

“It doesn’t seem to be built to specifications,” her engineer-husband replied.

Noise from the streets diverted the couple’s attention from the Space Needle, realizing they were not alone in this new reality. They moved to the living room and watched people from their west windows. Some were pointing at the sunrise, taking photos, and asking each other questions likely the same as the couple asked themselves.

As the couple watched, two Seattle Police officers in a cruiser came around a corner and stopped to talk with agitated people gesturing at the rising sun. People started gathering around the patrol car, expecting an official explanation for why the sun was rising in the west. The male officer was the driver and conversed with several people on the sidewalk as they gazed west. The female officer used a cell phone to take photos of the sunrise, as though she was preserving evidence at a crime scene.

“If there has been a crime committed, I wish them luck in solving it,” Ellen said to Sam as they watched the police officers interacting with their new neighbors.

Sam nodded and said, “It may not be a crime, but it is a game-changer. I mean, there has been a shift in the cosmos, so to speak, and it’s out of our control.”

After taking the photo on her personal cell phone, Officer Lynette Pryor got back in the cruiser as her partner talked with bewildered neighbors. She selected the image of the sun rising over the Olympics, tapped the forward icon, and typed in her sister’s name to deliver the photo by text, with the following message:

*“Yolanda, this is what we saw on patrol this morning. Since you are on the east coast, this sunrise may be coming your way soon. Love, Lynette.”*

- - - On The East Coast - - -

Agent-In-Charge, Yolanda Pryor knocked on the bedroom door a few minutes before 5 AM, following the protocol for waking the President during an emergency. After two consecutive knocks, she could hear either the President or her husband getting out of bed to answer the door. The President was in her first term in office, but this was not the first time she had been wakened at odd hours by Secret Service staff.

“Yolanda, give me a minute to put on a robe?” the President said as she opened the door. Lydia Bush, 50<sup>th</sup> President, the great-great-granddaughter of the former governor of Florida, was the first Hispanic Commander-In-Chief. The Kennebunkport compound had been in her family for several generations and was known as the Summer White House for number 41 back in the twentieth century.

“What is the situation?” the President asked as she closed the bedroom door behind her.

“We are on Elevated Alert, Madam President. If you walk with me to the west kitchen, you will see why,” the Agent advised. It was still a few minutes before daybreak, and gray light was starting to touch the Atlantic coastline in Maine. The President followed Yolanda through an interior hallway connected to the compound’s central kitchen. Yolanda turned off the overhead kitchen lights, allowing the faint pre-dawn light to illuminate the west window. “It is daylight in Seattle,” she said, handing the President her cell phone displaying the photo and text from her sister.

The President looked at the photo, read the text, handed the phone back to Yolanda, and pulled the robe around her shoulders as she looked out the west window to the faint canopy of amber over the town across the bay from Walker’s Point. After a few minutes, she walked through the kitchen into the dining room that faced the Atlantic and reached for the control panel that opened the curtains covering the bulletproof east windows. As curtains opened, she saw only faint specks of yellow landscape lighting contrasted with blackness to the east.

The Commander-In-Chief turned around and asked the Agent, “What has happened, and where is the Vice-President?” Without waiting for an answer, she walked across the kitchen to the coffeemaker.

“Madame President, the situation room told us to get you to a safe place and put you in contact with the White House. The Vice-President is in the situation room,” Yolanda said as she dialed a satellite phone.

“Yolanda, wait a minute before you do that,” the President said, putting a hand on the phone to stop the call. The Secret Service assigned Yolanda to the President’s security team, which started when Lydia Bush was sworn into office, and they have become friends within the context of a professional relationship.

She had met most of Yolanda's family, including her sister, who sent the text message. "I just want to make sure this is not a bad dream," she said, looking at Yolanda.

"It was the same feeling I had until I called my sister, and she described the sunrise over Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. Lydia, it is real, and I don't think there is much we can do about it," she advised.

"What are they doing about it in Seattle?"

Yolanda chuckled, "I asked Lynette just that question. She said, 'We are doing everything possible, which is basically calming people down.' They concluded the situation is out of their control at SPD, the mayor's control, the governor's control, and everybody up the line." Yolanda paused and looked out the window. "I think the line stops with you, but that doesn't mean there is anything you can do about where the sun decides to rise."

"I guess we should be grateful the sun is shining, even if it is in the wrong place," the President agreed.

Lydia Bush took the secure satellite phone from the Agent, sipped her coffee, and continued to watch the sunrise in the west. When a staff member answered the phone, she said, "This is the President; please give the phone to the Vice-President," as she walked through the house to an office designed for secure communication.

"Lydia, I'm sorry to have to wake you up, but I wanted to make sure you knew what has happened," the Vice-President explained when he got the phone.

"Greg, I'm glad you did. Tell me what happened and how we are addressing the situation." Vice-President Greg McCain was a graduate of the Naval Academy, served as a Navy pilot for six years, and flew operations from an aircraft carrier during the North Korean War. After the war, he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he had earned bi-partisan respect.

"I have been in contact with most of the Cabinet, Pentagon, NSC, and several governors on the West Coast. From what we know, there is no imminent external threat to our country or any other country. We are on Elevated Alert as a precaution," the VP summarized.

“Precaution against what?” the President asked.

“Good question; it sounded better than doing nothing,” he admitted.

“I see the sun rising in the west. Is there more than meets the eye involved in this situation?” she asked.

“Not in the short-term for the event itself. There are going to be consequences going forward. But, to answer your question, the event consists of a shift in the axis and rotation of the earth,” he explained.

“Oh, is that all?” the President said without a hint of humor in her voice. “Sorry, just hearing you say the world has moved was more than I could resist. When did this happen?”

“That question I can answer. Today is June 21, the summer solstice. This shift started just after midnight, Houston time, according to NASA,” he replied.

“What do they say about this?”

“Our astronauts on Space Force II reported their observations starting about an hour into the event. You will love this: they called in and said, ‘Houston, we have another problem,’ which is probably the understatement of the day. They said the earth started rotating north to south 180 degrees and changed direction. In just a couple of hours, our planet turned upside down, so to speak, and reversed rotation,” he continued.

“I suppose asking how this happened will not help,” she offered.

“There are only guesses, and those are offered reluctantly. The fact that it happened on the longest day of the year may be a clue, but nobody knows or has anything meaningful to offer.”

“No giant asteroid to blame?” the President asked without enthusiasm.

“Not unless it was invisible,” the VP replied.

“Is Space Force II affected by this flip or shift in the earth?” President Bush asked as she watched the sunrise from the office windows.

“They reported that nothing happened to them, except the space station is no longer on the orbit path they were on yesterday. Let me state it another way,

they are on the same orbit path, but what they are orbiting around has changed, if you know what I mean.”

Lydia Bush thought for a minute, “So, you are telling me we are now in the Southern Hemisphere, is that right?”

“Welcome to South America,” replied the VP.

“Well, I speak Spanish, so I’m all set,” the President responded. “Should I fly back to Washington?”

“There is nothing you can do here that cannot be done from Kennebunkport,” the VP said. Both people stopped talking and knew they were thinking the same thoughts.

Finally, the President said, “What can be done?”

“Just between us, I almost wish this were a terrorist attack, a hurricane, or another virus. Something we could work on with the Pentagon or even Congress,” the VP said.

“Greg, have you been in contact with General Baadani?” she asked.

“No, but I’ve talked to other people at the Pentagon. I’ll have him call you,” the VP offered.

General David Baadani was Chairperson of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a West Point graduate, fluent in Arabic and French, and a first-generation born of Egyptian parents in Chicago. He had been an infantry field officer during the North Korean War serving as a battalion commander. President Bush appreciated the General’s strategic thinking and straightforward manner.

After courtesy calls to the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Mexico, a staff person knocked on the open door and said, General Baadani was on the phone.

“Thank you for calling General,” the President said as she picked up the phone at her desk. “How are you, and what can you tell me about our situation?”

“The longest day of the year promises to be even longer,” the General responded. “Things are not normal but mostly manageable. You may have already been advised, but from what we know, there is no security threat involved in this shift

in the earth. The major problem for our military is the loss of navigation. We have temporarily grounded all military air traffic, and the FAA has done the same with civilian air traffic. GPS systems have become unstable because the satellites are not where they were as early as yesterday. We are now working to relocate military satellites where they should be relative to our planet. We have confirmed that the magnetic poles are consistent with a world that has flipped 180 degrees, meaning magnetic north is still pointing at the same location it was pointing yesterday. Shall I go on, Madam President?" he asked.

"Yes, please. I want to know the full extent of what we face," said the President.

"We have a problem with our submarine fleet since we cannot communicate with the boats on long-term missions, and they most likely know nothing about this 180-degree shift in the earth," he continued.

"Can the submarines still navigate?" the President interrupted.

"We have people working on that, but the current thinking is if they were headed north, for example, they are still headed north. If they are using hydrographic data on areas that have been charted, they will be fine. Sonar will continue to work. The problem is that when they surface and transition to GPS, they will be lost. The military depends on mobility, and right now, we have minimal capacity. The only good news is that any hostile force is dealing with the same issue," he concluded.

"General Baadani is anything you are telling me going to be classified information?" asked the Commander-in-Chief.

"I don't think so because it will be self-evident to any person using navigation equipment that something is wrong with the system. However, military systems are not entirely the same as civilian systems, and the extent of any difficulty with the military system is classified," he suggested.

The President said, "We are working on a press release, and I would appreciate your thoughts on whether the term 'crisis' applies in the situation we are facing today, General."

"What I have described to you is a temporary mobility crisis. If you are talking about the planet turning upside down, I find it best to consider whether it is

within a person's control. If we have no control, it is not a crisis. It could be a catastrophe, but when you are only along for the ride, it is not a crisis. For all we know, the planet will flip back to its original position tomorrow," he offered.

"Thank you for your thoughts," said the President as she terminated the call. She walked to the exterior door of the office and saw Yolanda standing outside facing Kennebunkport. As she opened the door, the Agent turned around and asked the President if she needed anything.

"No, I just wanted to get some fresh air," she said. The two women stood together, feeling the sun warm the morning. The dew on the lawn was starting to dry, birds were chirping, and the sun felt good on their shoulders. Without looking at Yolanda, the President said quietly, "What shall we call this?" she asked and paused. "Our new normal, the great reversal, how do we describe what has happened?"

Yolanda turned to her and said, "If you are asking me, it is Earth 3.0."

"What does that mean?" the President asked, turning to the Agent.

"Well, before the flood was Earth 1.0; after the flood, it was Earth 2.0. We are now in Earth 3.0 because this isn't just an update."