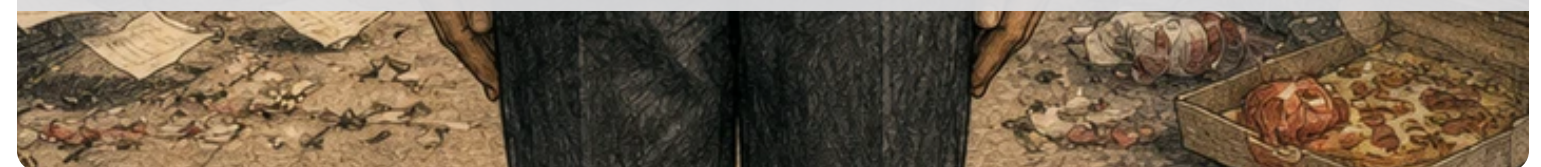




# The Republic of the Level

Carter Jones





In the sprawling city of Liberty's Echo, neon signs flash with slogans of absolute equality while citizens gather in the streets to debate every law at the top of their lungs. The architecture is a jagged mix of grand monuments and humble shacks, reflecting a society where no building is allowed to stand taller than its neighbor for long.



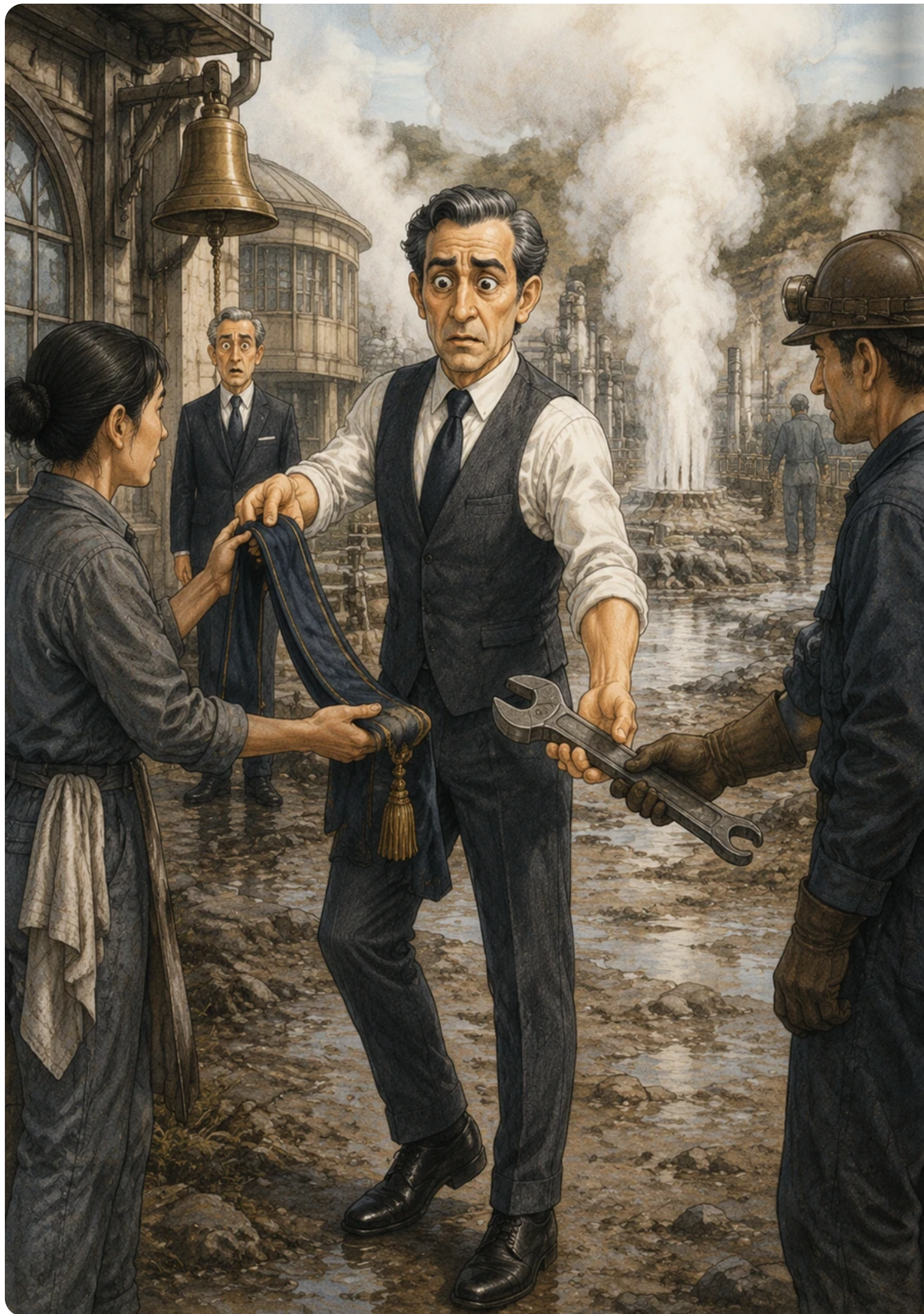
Caleb Vance starts his morning by checking the glowing Rotation Hub in the center of his communal living block. Today, the randomized algorithm has selected him to serve as a Chief Justice for the morning shift, a position he will hold for exactly four hours before returning to the labor pool.



Inside the People's Hall, there are no elevated benches or velvet chairs, only a vast circle of identical stools where everyone sits at the same eye level. Caleb listens to a dozen citizens shouting their grievances simultaneously, as the law dictates that no voice should be silenced or prioritized over another.



A bewildered foreign envoy stands in the center of the chaos, clutching a formal treaty and asking to speak with the President. Caleb and the crowd laugh heartily, explaining that there are three hundred million presidents here and the envoy must convince every single one of them.



When the midday bell chimes, Caleb immediately strips off his formal sash and hands it to a woman who was previously cleaning the windows. He accepts a heavy industrial wrench from a passing engineer and heads toward the geothermal vents to begin his afternoon of manual repair work.



During his shift, Caleb encounters a group of citizens being publicly questioned for trying to keep the same house for more than a week. The air is thick with the sound of a thousand passionate arguments as the community tries to decide if personal comfort is a form of forbidden privilege.



Caleb retreats to a small, hidden corner of the city park where he has secretly tended to a single rosebush for months. He knows that if he is caught, the plant will be uprooted and redistributed, but for a moment, he finds peace in the quiet act of individual care.



News reaches the square that a neighboring empire has moved its borders, prompting a massive, uncoordinated mobilization of the Equalist fleet. Thousands of ships launch into the sky, each pilot arguing over the radio about the best tactical approach, creating a terrifying and unpredictable swarm of democratic fury.



As evening falls, the city glows with the light of a million small fires where families and strangers share their evening meals in a rotating feast. Caleb watches the sunset, realizing that while the noise is exhausting, the absence of masters makes every citizen the author of their own chaotic destiny.



The Great Reshuffle begins at midnight, with the digital screens flickering as they assign new roles for the coming dawn. Caleb closes his eyes, ready to wake up as a teacher, a soldier, or a cook, embracing the restless spirit of a nation that refuses to let anyone stand above the rest.