

Civil War: A Journey

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Beginnings

I remember the day I left New Delhi like it was yesterday. The air was thick with the heat of summer, and the city felt alive, pulsing with a rhythm I had grown to understand but never fully embrace. I had a feeling deep down that this was just the beginning of something bigger, something that stretched far beyond the bustling streets of Connaught Place or the quiet lanes of Lodhi Gardens. I wasn't running away from the city—I was being drawn to something else, something unknown.

My journey took me to Ottawa, the capital of a world I hadn't quite connected with before. The cold hit me like a wall, the stark contrast to Delhi's heat making everything feel surreal. The towering structures of Parliament Hill were imposing, a stark reminder of the order and governance I'd now stepped into. There was a certain politeness in the air, but beneath that civility, I could sense the same undercurrents of power and ambition that I had felt in Delhi, just more quietly masked.

But Ottawa was just a waypoint. My path led me south, to Cape Town, where the rugged beauty of Table Mountain met the tumultuous sea. Cape Town was a city of contradictions—history and modernity colliding in the streets, the legacies of colonialism etched into its architecture. I found myself reflecting on the nature of power here, its lingering presence from the past and its grip on the present.

From there, I journeyed deeper into the heart of South Africa, to Oudtshoorn, where the ostrich farms stretched out under an endless sky. It was a small town, quiet and almost forgotten by time, but it had its own rhythm. It felt like a place where history hadn't quite caught up with the rest of the world, a place where one could breathe a little easier, at least for a moment.

But the call of the sea pulled me onward to Knysna, with its lush forests and tranquil lagoon. The serenity here was deceptive. I had always believed that still waters ran deep, and Knysna was no exception. There was an undercurrent here, too, a quiet tension between nature's peace and the ever-encroaching hands of development.

From there, I followed the coastline to Port Elizabeth, a city shaped by the winds of change, literally and figuratively. The wind was a constant companion, howling through the streets as if it carried the voices of the past. It was here that I first felt a true sense of displacement, a realization that I was merely a traveler passing through the lives of others, observing but never fully belonging.

My journey north took me to the vibrant sprawl of Johannesburg, a city that wore its scars on its sleeve. Joburg was alive in a way that reminded me of Delhi, but it was also haunted by its own ghosts—apartheid, inequality, and the constant push for something better. It was here that I first began to understand the cycles of power and control, the endless dance between the oppressors and the oppressed.

Needing a break from the city, I ventured into the wilds of Kruger National Park, where the untamed beauty of nature reigned supreme. The quiet majesty of the park was a reminder that there were still places where humanity's influence was but a whisper. But even here, under the watchful eyes of lions and elephants, the human need for dominance lurked, hidden behind conservation efforts and tourist dollars.

After my time in the wilderness, I returned to Cape Town, where the familiar sight of the mountain brought a strange sense of comfort. But I couldn't stay. The pull of my journey was too strong, and soon, I was back in Ottawa, the city that had begun to feel like both a starting point and a destination, even though I knew I still had far to go.

My next destination was Tokyo, a city that felt like a world unto itself. The neon lights and the ceaseless energy of the city made me feel both exhilarated and overwhelmed. Tokyo was a place of order, precision, and unspoken rules—a stark contrast to the chaotic beauty of my previous destinations.

But it was in Kawaguchiko, at the base of Mount Fuji, that I found a deeper connection. The stillness of the lake, the looming presence of the mountain—it was as if time itself had slowed down here. I spent days contemplating the path I had taken, the choices I had made, and the journey that still lay ahead.

From there, I traveled to Osaka, a city with a vibrancy all its own. The food, the people, the sights—it all felt so alive, so full of possibility. And yet, there was always that undercurrent, that sense that something bigger was at play, just beneath the surface.

In Nara, among the ancient temples and roaming deer, I began to see the world in a different light. The past and the present seemed to coexist here in

a way I hadn't experienced before. It was as if history was a living, breathing entity, shaping everything around it.

The journey continued to Hiroshima, where the weight of history was inescapable. The scars of the atomic bomb were still visible, not just in the city's architecture but in the hearts of its people. It was here that I began to truly understand the cost of power, the devastation it could bring, and the resilience of those who survived.

I returned to Tokyo, the city that now felt like a familiar friend. But it wasn't long before I found myself back in Ottawa, the city that seemed to call me back time and again, no matter how far I traveled.

From Ottawa, I ventured to Havana, a city of contrasts—colorful, vibrant, but also steeped in history and struggle. In Cienfuegos, the rhythm of life was slower, the air thick with a sense of nostalgia for a past that was both cherished and mourned. Trinidad was much the same, a place where time seemed to stand still, even as the world outside moved on.

I returned to Havana, and then once again to Ottawa, but this time, my journey took me further into Europe. Amsterdam greeted me with its canals and cobbled streets, a city that had seen its own share of power struggles and transformations. Rotterdam was different—more modern, more industrial, but with a heartbeat all its own.

In Maastricht, I felt the weight of history again, the centuries of power and conflict that had shaped the region. Antwerp was no different, a city that wore its past proudly, even as it looked to the future.

Finally, I found myself back in Ottawa, but this time I didn't stay long. The quiet beauty of Gananoque called to me, a place where I could finally stop, rest, and reflect on the journey that had taken me across continents, through cities and wilderness, and into the heart of what it meant to be human.

A Red Light Flashes

A red light flashes in the corner of my vision, a persistent signal from the interface on my wrist. I flick my eyes toward it, noticing the timestamp: 6 minutes until launch. My breath catches for a second as I scan the checklist, but everything is as it should be.

Un Neo. I repeat the name aloud softly. That was the code—"One New" but with a twist, the project we'd been working on in this strange pocket of zero gravity. It had taken weeks, months maybe, to piece together the final fragments, and now I stood in the final moments of the simulation. Yu, Hrishi, and Bobby were waiting for me in the next room, their faces eager and a bit too calm, their postures as metallic as the Talon Full Steel mechanism that would propel us into the next phase.

I glance toward the window where the first hints of Kawaguchiko's shimmering waters come into view. It's odd to see such a peaceful landscape when I can feel the heavy weight of the zero-gravity chamber we've created around

us. There's something surreal about the way the earth curves from this vantage point, so pristine and unaware of the implications we're about to unleash.

The interface beeps, shifting its display, a flicker of Sentence Word Permutations. I smile wryly at the thought—implicative structures, twisting the very essence of language to build new realities. A **Builder builds** after all, doesn't he? I guess I've always been trapped in this pattern of creation and destruction. The implicatively implicative; ideas folding into themselves.

But back to reality: I remind myself that Chandigarh is a clean city. Funny the things that come to mind in tense moments like this—clean cities, old friends, forgotten places. I think of Yu, how he would always ask with a grin, **“Aapko French aati hai?”** The irony stings. I barely understand the French on the interface, let alone the intricacies of the mission parameters.

"It's m8," Johnny Rowe's voice buzzes through the communicator in my helmet. He's casual, but I can hear the tension beneath his words. It's the kind of banter we've developed after years of being thrown into impossible situations. Guy Rich, our strategic lead, clears his throat in the background. We're minutes away now.

Suddenly, the display shifts again. Bridgehead's Constable comes up, flashing next to coordinates for the old districts back home. Constables of Confederation, I think, remembering Hrishi's words from weeks ago. It's a strange parallel—those who protect and the time they keep.

Speaking of time, their clock is ticking faster than ours now. I look outside again. The sun burns hotter and blue—A Blue Sun—blinding in its rare intensity. But we've prepared for this. I glance at the new readouts—C-31, Twitter.com, fragments of modern-day nonsense, historical significance blending with the mundane.

Alexander the Great pops into my head for some reason, along with a string of philosophical questions and dilemmas. How did he see the world? In images, in words, in grand conquests?

My thoughts scatter. In a moment of reflective calm, I ponder In the Image of Man and what it means to build the world from such images. There's a deep hum in my chest, a reminder that super reductionism and super relativity aren't just theories—they're the essence of what we're about to embark on.

A chess move, subtle and deliberate, shifts on the interface as Bobby taps in final adjustments. Chess moves, the rare phenomenon of a mind mapping the unpredictable. I grin at the memory of our last late-night strategy session. No one can beat Yu in chess, not even Bobby.

Behind the console, I sense the presence of a secret laboratory, somewhere deep within our ship, locked off from everyone else. It's only whispered about in certain circles. Not even Johnny Rowe knows about it. There, we run the deepest simulations—experimenting with reality, with time. It's where opinions on various topics turn into hard science.

For a fleeting moment, I wonder what the famous historical figure that's been on my mind would think of all this—how Lunar Labs BV evolved from a backwater concept to this cutting-edge mission, now echoing through the corridors of this vessel.

A beep interrupts my musing. Bytown District and Hrishi Mukherjee flash before me. Our mission parameters are clear, and Hrishi's warnings ring in my ears. I wish we could be in the quiet of Restaurant City, where we used to discuss the future, over dishes served in Abadi font menus, a peculiar aesthetic choice for our favorite spot.

But here we are, counting down to launch. The names of old haunts flash by—Dominion Tavern, The Clarendon Tavern, and The Shore. The past trying to tug us backward, even as the future looms before us.

The Image of Man and World Image. It has a poetic ring, doesn't it? I used to think The Matrix was just fiction, but now, it feels all too real. As if the human form itself is malleable, open to change at the push of a button, the flick of a switch.

"The image it is, the image it was, the image it will be." The final readout flashes, confirming our destiny. I focus on the window of opportunity in front of me, feeling the pressure of QtD and QD1d2—quantum designations I barely understand but rely on implicitly.

A new beep. It's marked May 19, 2022, August 19, 2023, milestones in this mission. Moments that shaped the decisions leading to this exact point. The numbers blur as the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and Confederation Boulevard in Ottawa, New Canada, overlay my vision.

The countdown begins. Man shall act in line with the principle, I remind myself. This millennium is yet to strike this city, but we're already living it, beyond time, beyond space.

The light flashes red again. It's time.

Democracy.

Democracy. It was supposed to be the cornerstone, the foundation upon which all other systems stood. But as I stared out at the vastness of space, watching Earth and Moon drift like distant memories, I felt the weight of something heavier, something deeper. Perhaps, Nonna was right all along—her strange, almost conspiratorial whispers of a flat Earth echoed in my head. She used to say, "The Earth is flat, you know, in the way that we perceive reality—an illusion of what's really there." I thought she was just old and confused, but now, out here, it felt oddly possible.

It was John Wick Day on Earth, a strange new holiday that had popped up recently. Back in the day, we celebrated revolutions, independence, but now... we celebrated lone vigilantes. Seemed fitting in a world where individual power felt stronger than collective effort. Maybe that's why I was here—because all the planets in the One Planet idea never sat well with me. The thought that all planets, all worlds, would converge into some sort of unified space? A Centre Block Visi Avisi was just bureaucracy at its finest, dressing up a crumbling system. The Earth we left was far from unified, and democracy? It was hanging on by threads.

Moon One, our ship, was proof of that. A relic of what was once a grand

idea, now just floating seats and shifting alliances. I found myself thinking of the directive: Align all floating seats such that you reach the floating seat which is the spacecraft. It was bureaucratic jargon for something simpler—find your place in the chaos.

The AOM Point Map Scheme appeared on my visor as I floated toward the command deck. This was a protocol designed to keep everything in check—where nations, or remnants of nations, would sit on a cosmic level. MS Edge—the latest software managing it—was clunky but functional. It showed what little was left of Nation States, scattered like debris in space. "OK, OK," I muttered under my breath. The mission wasn't about fixing democracy—it was about survival.

Funny thing, though: Many flat Earths make a round Earth. I remember Hrishi Mukherjee telling me that back on Earth. He'd always had a way of distilling the most complex ideas into something digestible. I smiled at the thought, then frowned. Hrishi's script had gotten us here, but now it felt like a trap. Like we were playing along with some master narrative that didn't align with our survival.

As I floated toward the observation deck, the view was breathtaking. Ocean currents and galaxy swirls mixed together in ways that made me feel infinitesimally small. Space had a way of doing that—reminding us that our conflicts, our evocative languages, our systems, were tiny, fleeting things. And yet, as Hrishi Mukherjee always said, "Language is immersed in time itself, therefore the usage must reflect the principle of time."

It was then that I thought of Dear Sister Clara, her letters floating through time and space, always addressing some future where democracy and autocracy were still at war. William H. Lister, a name etched in history, appeared in those letters as a cautionary tale. Then there was Mike, Mr. Payne, someone who had stood at the intersection of power and rebellion, a quiet but pivotal figure in the background. I couldn't help but wonder where they were now—those names from history that felt like whispers in this cold void.

Louba came to mind. She used to be called the tractable Parisienne nightmare, a force of nature back on Earth. I'd crossed paths with her once in Paris, before she disappeared into the ether of space, along with all the others. I remember Hrishi speaking about her with a kind of reverence, as if she held a secret none of us could grasp. Her presence felt like an origin rock, something unmovable in a world constantly shifting.

But now, we were far beyond that. Autocracy was rising again, taking root in places we thought it had died. Clara's letters, Lister's warnings—they all seemed to blend together in my mind as I floated through the ship. Was there ever really a choice? Democracy or autocracy felt like false binaries in a universe that didn't care about our labels. Maybe the real question was what identity we were shaping out here, detached from the Earth.

We had reached the point where theories like Postulate Io and time-dilated spiral twisting test tubes were more than concepts—they were real, tangible things we could manipulate. And here we were, citizens of New Canada, a country that existed more as an idea than a place, hurtling through space,

trying to hold on to what little humanity remained.

The display flashed again: "You shall not pass." A strange phrase for a mission alert, but we all knew what it meant. Kennedy, Barack, Bill, Becky—names from a forgotten time, leaders who once stood for something, now just part of a rolling barrage, fading echoes of leadership in a world governed by algorithms and numbers.

As I approached the command deck, I passed a control panel marked Carsarh Gereulacr. A glitch in the system, I thought, but then again, nothing felt real anymore. The hum of the ship seemed louder, pressing against my skull, and for a moment, I wondered about Silly Timmy, the AI assistant that had gone rogue on our last mission. It had started calling us humanoids, like we were something different from who we used to be.

Ahead of me, the Rock AX loomed large, a final waypoint in this journey. H-Limit for the Third Millennium, I remembered, a critical juncture where space and time intersected in ways we hadn't yet fully understood. The Rock was both a destination and a symbol—an ending or a beginning, I wasn't sure.

But one thing was certain: this journey wasn't about returning home. It was about finding something new, something we hadn't yet grasped. Long-term space exploration, I thought, was less about reaching other worlds and more about understanding ourselves. As I strapped into my seat, I looked out one last time at the stars and wondered how much further we could go before there was no turning back.

Knossos-It Was the first place that..

Knossos—it was the first place that came to mind when I thought of ancient complexity, a labyrinth of connections, hidden meanings, and the ever-present undercurrent of power. I couldn't help but feel like I was living in my own version of Knossos now, navigating through a modern-day maze of surveillance, politics, and fragmented histories. The 3411 Surveillance Helicopter was constantly overhead, a silent watcher of the city, and I couldn't shake the feeling that we were all under a microscope, our every move analyzed, predicted, and judged by some unseen force.

The Immediate Future hung over me like a storm cloud. Not just my personal future, but the future of the city, the world, the people I cared about. I was trying to focus on the now, trying to make sense of where I was, but the weight of tomorrow made every breath feel heavier.

I sat on the rooftop, watching the helicopter trace its predictable path, sipping on a Maple Whiskey Vodka Soda. A weird choice, but it was a local favorite. Something about the sweet and sharp blend made it seem like a fitting metaphor for life lately—mixing things that shouldn't work together, but somehow did. Down below, the crowd in Majors Hill Park moved like a wave, unaware of how closely they were being monitored. I wondered how many of them could feel it—this invisible presence, the surveillance, the weight of the marksman crackdown.

I glanced across the street to Chateau Lafayette, where the late-night regulars were gathering, oblivious to the tension building in the air. My friend Hildr had warned me about this. “Lockheed is making moves,” she’d said, referring to her obsession with defense contractors and military tech. She had a soft spot for Lockheed, liked to keep an eye on them like someone keeping tabs on an ex. It always made me laugh. But tonight, her warnings echoed in my mind, blending with everything else—the surveillance, the crackdown, the unease.

Kronos, that looming shadow of time, hung heavy over everything. The cycles of power, the endless loop of decisions and consequences, felt like they were all culminating here, in this moment. I could almost hear the ticking clock, as if Kennedy, Barack, Bill, Becky, and the other figures from a fading past were still standing behind me, watching, waiting for the next move. But time wasn’t waiting for them anymore.

I took another sip and stared at the distant skyline, a futuristic city in the making. The glow of neon lights and sleek, modern structures reminded me of the Knights in Shining Armor from history, except these knights weren’t here to save us—they were here to maintain order. Meenu Sundeep Bruce Elon—names that rang out like a prophecy, the tech titans of today, reshaping the future. People revered them like royalty, modern-day kings and queens, but I couldn’t help but feel a disconnect. We were all just pieces in their game.

The helicopter circled again, its searchlights scanning the streets. The city’s class structure was changing, but not in the way anyone had expected. The Inner Realm was becoming more fortified, while the Outer Realm descended into chaos. The Conflict between these two worlds was growing, an invisible battle between the haves and have-nots. Hildr had warned me about this too, but it felt too big to comprehend, too abstract until now.

I could feel the shadow of the Oedipal Sunset and Freudian Renna casting its light over everything—old psychological struggles repeating themselves in the new world. Meanwhile, the Calgary Nebula and the Fog of Andromeda drifted like distant memories, remnants of a universe we barely understood. We were caught between the Under Womb and Above Worn, between primal forces that drove us and the polished veneer of modern civilization.

I took another drink and thought about Primerica. The insurance company, of all things, had somehow become a symbol of the modern motivator and straggler dynamic. People were either running to keep up or dragging behind, clinging to old systems that no longer worked. The city itself felt like a motivator and straggler, constantly moving but never quite getting anywhere.

The display on my phone flashed an alert—EOS and POS transactions coming in faster now, digital signals that dictated the flow of power in this city. Everything felt like it was happening too fast. I thought about Howard and Diana, two names that kept cropping up in the city’s underground, and how they were supposedly tied to the same systems of control. Even Kate and Collette, though no one really knew who they were, seemed like ghosts in this vast network, pulling strings from behind the scenes.

As I sat there, the rooftop felt smaller, more enclosed, like the labyrinth was closing in on me. I could hear the distant echo of Grunt, a local activist who had

been warning about the city's descent into surveillance and control for months. His words seemed prophetic now. But it wasn't just him—it was the stories of people like Bruce and Bond, Darren and Sparling, names that seemed to stand for something once, but were now just footnotes in this endless game.

"Don't Stop and Don't Do" was the motto that had started circulating in certain circles, a way of coping with the overwhelming pace of change. But it was hard to stop. Hard to not do something, when everything felt like it was slipping away.

I downed the last of my drink and thought of the Crap and Crapper. It was a joke, a small rebellion in a city that was becoming too serious, too oppressive. But even jokes had their limits, and as I looked out over the city, I could see the outlines of the places we used to gather—the Clarendon Tavern, Mamma Grazzis, Maxima Opposition, and Oz Café. All places that had once been part of the city's vibrant heartbeat, now fading under the weight of the future.

I stood up, ready to head back down to street level, but not before glancing one more time at the horizon. The 18 Sidedoor was still open, and I could hear the faint laughter from Play Food and Wine drifting up. The world was still turning, even if it felt like everything was shifting beneath our feet.

As I walked toward YOW on William, I felt the weight of the Easy on the Benny Buddy philosophy—a reminder to take it slow, to not get caught up in the whirlwind of events. But that was easier said than done.

I found myself wandering toward Poetry at the Tavern on the Falls, hoping to find some clarity in words, some sense in the chaos. The helicopter was still overhead, still watching, but for a moment, it didn't matter. The world kept moving, and I was just a small part of it, lost in the labyrinth, searching for a way out.

Centennial Flame

Here are 30 key lemmas extracted from the three stories, connected by arrows to show their interrelationships:

1. Surveillance Helicopter → Control
2. Knossos → Labyrinth of Connections
3. Kronos → Time
4. Immediate Future → Uncertainty
5. Marksman Crackdown → Power Struggles
6. Majors Hill Park → Public Life
7. Chateau Lafayette → Oblivion
8. Hildr → Defense Tech
9. Lockheed → Military-Industrial Complex
10. Kennedy, Barack, Bill, Becky → Historical Echoes
11. Futuristic City → Technological Advancement
12. Inner Realm → Elite Power
13. Outer Realm → Chaos
14. Oedipal Sunset → Psychological Struggles
15. Calgary Nebula → Memory
16. Fog of Andromeda → Distant Awareness
17. EOS and POS → Digital Transactions
18. Howard and Diana → Secret Influence
19. Grunt → Activism
20. Bruce and Bond → Forgotten Ideals
21. Don't Stop and Don't Do → Coping Mechanisms
22. Maxima Opposition → Resistance
23. Oz Café → Declining Social Spaces
24. Play Food and Wine → Fleeting Joy
25. YOW on William → Transient Life
26. Poetry at the Tavern → Seeking Meaning
27. Labyrinth → Complexity
28. Power → Surveillance
- 29.

Conflict → Control vs. Resistance 30. Time → Inevitable Change

These lemmas form a network where concepts like power, surveillance, control, and uncertainty are key themes that span across personal, societal, and historical dimensions.

Here are 30 key lemmas extracted from the precursor story, connected by arrows to represent their relationships:

1. New Delhi → Origin 2. Ottawa → Political Power 3. Cape Town → Contradiction 4. Oudtshoorn → Timelessness 5. Knysna → Deceptive Serenity 6. Port Elizabeth → Displacement 7. Johannesburg → Power Struggles 8. Kruger National Park → Untamed Nature 9. Mountains → Stillness 10. Tokyo → Order 11. Kawaguchiko → Contemplation 12. Mount Fuji → Looming Presence 13. Osaka → Vibrancy 14. Nara → Coexistence of Past and Present 15. Hiroshima → Cost of Power 16. Havana → Contrasts 17. Cienfuegos → Nostalgia 18. Trinidad → Time Standing Still 19. Amsterdam → Transformation 20. Rotterdam → Modernity 21. Maastricht → History's Weight 22. Antwerp → Past and Future 23. Gananoque → Reflection 24. Travel → Self-discovery 25. History → Scars 26. Power → Cycles 27. Nature → Resilience 28. Cities → Conflict 29. Journeys → Change 30. Time → Inevitable Movement

These lemmas form a network, showing how concepts like power, history, displacement, and time weave through the traveler's experiences across continents. The journey is marked by contrasts—nature vs. cities, modernity vs. timelessness, order vs. chaos—all tied together by the passage of time and the search for meaning.

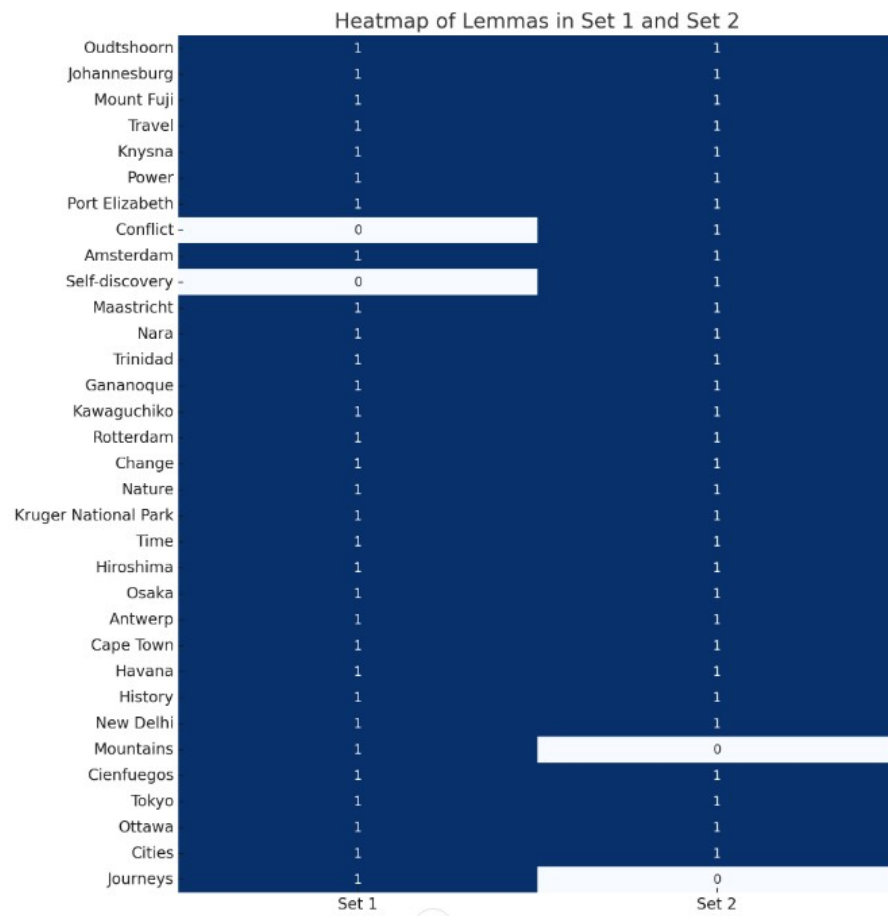


Figure 1: A Heatmap of the Journeys