

# OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY

## • The Call of the City

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# Contents

<b>I</b>	<b>In the Arms of California</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>The District</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>America the Beautiful</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>–INFORMATION–</b>	<b>15</b>



**Part I**

**In the Arms of California**



# ONE

I woke up earlier this year to find myself in a hospital in San Francisco. City by the Bay. City of Dreams. I had been dreaming for a very long time.

The calendar hung on the wall was the first thing I saw, but it was too far away to see what day it was, even with the ambient lights outlining the ceiling. Pretty fancy lights, I hadn't seen anything like that in a hospital before. I had woken up in the middle of the night. I got up, and after a certain amount of convincing was done, to get my limbs amicable to movement, I managed to get myself near the calendar on the wall. I was still too far away to see the day, but at the top of the page, in larger bold font, I could read

2025 — YOUR LUCKY YEAR!

I remember the moment very well. I moved closer to the wall and stood still for several seconds before starting to rip through the calendar. It was no joke! No April 1st for the month, and what's more, the entire calendar was for the year 2025, indeed. Someone had played a very elaborate practical joke on an fallen man. How terrible of them. I couldn't think of any member of my family who had the malicious ingenuity necessary for this sort of thing, but some of my friends certainly possessed extravagant quantities of both malice and genius. Everything was alright. I had recovered from my fall and people were playing jokes on me. Life was going to be as chill as a man could hope.

I sat on the bed and recalled falling from our front porch steps on 37th St in Georgetown: the slip, the fright, everything. I remember being worried briefly about how violent I was moving towards the ground, before I passed out. I remember the scene of the rain hitting the old-world paving in the street and the cobbled paths in the garden, drenching the leaves that had fallen on the sidewalk that season, grinding them slowly into the stone, and falling on the trees that stood in noble abundance everywhere in Georgetown.

That was the last sight I remember before I went to sleep in March 2012. I would not find out about my 13 year coma until later in the night. For now I set about exploring the fascinating hospital environment, I was very thirsty, there had to be a cute nurse somewhere to help fix this.

I walked down the hallway from my room. The corridor leading from a set of rooms down to a bigger lobby. The lighting was sparse, the walls were white, covered in paintings and moving pictures. LCD photo albums lined the wall on both sides. In my stupor I made note to check the prices on these things on ebay, last I remembered

they weren't exactly cheap enough to cover hospital corridors with.

As I dragged myself down the hallway I noticed the patient rooms, which were part see-through, had a staggering number of displays and racks of LEDs next to the bedsteads. Where was I? Everything had this clean Apple Inc feeling to it that was starting to unnerve me, and I moved faster to the doors up ahead, taking a few agonized steps, then someone screamed from behind a cubicle to the right:

“OH MY GOODNESS – Mr. Fontaine – what are you doing – you're awake! SECURITAY!!”



**TWO**



**Part II**

**The District**



## **Part III**

# **America the Beautiful**



**Part IV**

**–INFORMATION–**

