

Tom took a moment to spit shine the metal plate before him. In its blurred reflection, he straightened his clothes before adjusting the pack strapped to his belt. He had to squint to see himself in the makeshift mirror. Beyond the bleary image, his apartment was sparsely lit. A pair of candles lay to one side of the metal sheet, and to the right was a monitor. And when the bright white window of a file transfer closed and his room dimmed accordingly, Tom rushed to shut down his computer. Electricity was at a premium these days, and his use of it was especially taxing on his wallet. An array of dozens of USB hubs lay on his desk, and he began to separate the flash drives into various compartments within his pack. He used to regret having slept through the first day of the "incident." When he turned up to the supermarkets, the looting had only left the tech alleys unscathed. There wasn't much merit to grabbing such paraphernalia when the internet had gone down. But Tom now had an untouched market that he could capitalize on with his data hoarding sensibilities, the largest sales of which he made with sales of Wikipedia archives. As Tom made one last sweep of his shirt for wrinkles, he snuffed out the candles and cautiously stepped out into the light.