

"The Cattle" (Excerpt from the book)

Chapter 1

Sunshine and shadows darted and danced on the silver fuselages of countless machines, suspended in mid-air, like a swarm of bees trying to find their way back to the hive. It was a typical bright June afternoon. Brian Warburton was driving back to the air terminal where he worked as a computer programmer. He was on a short break from work, and had stopped at home to take a quick snooze before returning.

It's going to be another beautiful evening at work, he said to himself. Brian loved his work. He felt an almost infinite love for his computers, but the feeling was not mutual. Sometimes, but not too often, he felt that he'd had enough of them. This was especially so, lately. His disaffection was generally caused by too much overtime work, the stress of short deadlines, and the need to have everything working perfectly. He knew that the pressures would go away, eventually, but right now he was tired; he needed to rest. Freaking job, he thought, walking through the bright, wide but crowded corridor of O'Hare's Terminal number 5. I hope there won't be any power outage tonight. The last couple of days had been terrible. Out of nowhere, they started to have problems with the electric generators that were supposed to provide power for the computer system.

"That's really stupid. The servers can be damaged by something like this," he complained to his boss every time it happened, but no one seemed to be listening to him. Brian was trying to get through the crowd of passengers who, with their luggage at their sides, were waiting for something to happen.

Next, he passed through a group of children who, becoming impatient and not having anything better to do, started a competition to see who could make the highest pitched noise. Lastly, he had to make his way through a large group of Transport Security Agency employees, who were about to give up on trying to keep order in the hallway. Where, the hell, are all those people coming from? He wondered.

But he knew exactly where they were coming from. Ever since employees of the Department of Homeland Security, the Transportation Safety Agency, the National Guard and the Chicago Police Department started working side by side, a few months ago, to manage the large crowds of people trying to enter the United States,

there was utter chaos in the airport. To expedite processing such a large number of people and to help the overworked staff, they brought in extra workers who were inexperienced in the screening process.

After they implemented the new law, this hellfire was unleashed. It was bad before, he thought—but not that bad. Even the oldest and most experienced Immigration veterans didn't remember anything like this happening before. Not ever. It was a deluge of people. It looked like everybody scheduled his or her meetings at the same time and in the same city. Everyone was trying to get things done before tomorrow's deadline, not understanding nor wanting to hear that it wouldn't matter at all.