

FIGHTING REALITY

THE CITADEL OF BUREAUCRACY

"What kind of weirdo book is this, anyway?" you might be asking. I'll tell you.

It's a gateway; a portal to a world like ours with one important difference: You needn't worry so much about what you say or do in this one. It's a fantasy, a cathartic adventure. In this story YOU are the protagonist. You decide what to say and where to go.

And where are you?

It's July 5, 2019. You're an Acting Policy Analyst in the Civil Service, an up-and-comer with a promising career and a fine pension at the end of it all. But it's not all smiles *und* sunshine. The government's Albatross Pay System has stopped your pay, money's tight, and six months of overtime have left you on the ragged edge.

Thank God it's Friday.

You've just got to make it through one more day before starting your vacation. Only, there's a long train ride, dodgy government campus, and slew of frustrated coworkers between you and the end of the day. Still, with diligence and a generous helping of luck, you might just see it through.

J.D. Mitchell



**The Citadel
— of —
Bureaucracy**

Illustrated by Matt Herring

Published by Fighting Reality Books

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No civil servants or animals were harmed in the making of this book. The author does not condone acts of violence or animal cruelty, in the workplace or elsewhere. Not even against Canada geese.

This is a work of satirical fiction. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events, is purely coincidental, no matter how familiar or relatable. The characters depicted herein are composite caricatures and the events deliberately absurd.

Illustrated by Matt Herring

Front cover by Mason T. O'Halloran

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For civil servants everywhere.

If the price of freedom is eternal vigilance,
the price of accountability is effective bureaucracy.

The Darby Complex



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“To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity.”

–Douglas Adams

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

–Mahatma Gandhi

“Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards.”

–Max Weber

Overcoming Opponents in the Civil Service

You're an Acting Policy Analyst. What does a Policy Analyst do? Why, everything. Anything. All duties as assigned. If something needs drafting, you're ready. If a manager needs briefing, you're there. If a stakeholder needs consulting, you're on it.

Don't worry, you'll get the hang of it. Probably.

Before embarking on your bureaucratic adventure, you must first determine your strengths and weaknesses. In government terms, your Core Competencies. You're self-taught in Microsoft Office Applications and possess a wide array of policy, planning, and analytical expertise learned on the fly.

To determine how good a civil servant you are, you must use dice (the good, old-fashioned six-sided kind) to establish your Core Competency scores. If you don't own dice, just Google "roll 2d6." You can record these and other scores on a notepad or on the *Record of Adventure* form provided on page 18.

If your eyes have already glazed over, you can skip to "How to Cheat Fairly" on page 17. But if you're already struggling, I shudder to think how you'll handle the infinite policies of the Civil Service.

Core Competencies

Every civil servant has three basic Core Competencies: SKILL, STAMINA, and LUCK.

SKILL reflects your expertise and effectiveness as a Policy Analyst. Roll one die. Add 6 and enter the total in the SKILL box on your *Record of Adventure* (FRM-0001c).

STAMINA reflects your fitness and determination; the higher it is the longer you'll survive the Civil Service. Roll two dice. Add 12 and enter the total in the STAMINA box.

LUCK indicates how well you'll weather the misfortunes heaped upon you in the Civil Service. Roll one die. Add 6 and enter the total in the LUCK box.

Your SKILL, STAMINA, and LUCK scores will change a lot throughout your adventure. Keep an accurate record, including your *Initial* scores. Although you may restore Core Competency points, these totals may never exceed your *Initial* scores and may never fall below zero.

If your STAMINA ever reaches zero and you aren't given a reference, it's the last straw and you pack it in for the day. In that case, turn to **344**.

Confrontations

You will have many Confrontations in the Civil Service. The option to flee may be given, but if not, or if you get off on a good fight, resolve the contest as follows.

First, record your opponent's SKILL and STAMINA scores in an open *Encounter Box* on your FRM-0001c. The sequence is then:

1. Roll two dice and add your opponent's SKILL.
2. Roll two dice and add your current SKILL.
3. If your total is higher than your opponent's, you have struck a blow to their ego, argument or (in rare cases) body. If your opponent's total is higher, they have bested you. If both totals are the same, it's a tie—start the next *Confrontation Round* from step 1.
4. Whoever lost the round loses 2 STAMINA; reduce your or your opponent's STAMINA score.
5. Begin the next *Confrontation Round* by repeating steps 1-4. This sequence continues until you or your opponent's STAMINA score has been reduced to zero (one of you have lost the Confrontation).
6. If you lose, you'll be instructed where to turn in the relevant passage. If there's no instruction, turn to **344**.

Escaping

You might be given the option of running away from a Confrontation. If you do, lose 2 STAMINA points as you flee. Such is the price of cowardice. You may only *Escape* if specifically noted on the page.

Tests of Skill and Luck

Successfully navigating the Civil Service requires a certain measure of skill and luck. You will be called upon to *Test your Skill* or *Test your Luck* throughout your adventure, as follows:

1. Roll two dice.
2. If the total is *equal to or less than* your current respective SKILL or LUCK score, you have been *successful* or *lucky* and the result will go in your favour.
3. If the number rolled is *higher* than your current score, you are *unsuccessful* or *unlucky* and will be penalized.
4. No matter your current SKILL or LUCK, double ones are always a success and double sixes are always a failure.

Unlike Tests of Skill, each time you Test your Luck, you must subtract one point from your current LUCK score. Everyone's luck runs out sooner or later.

Restoring Skill, Stamina and Luck

Skill

Your SKILL score shouldn't change much during your adventure. A better item might increase your SKILL, but you may only use one at a time (you can't claim two bonuses for carrying two upgraded phones). Taking a Painkiller (see below) restores three (3) points of SKILL.

Stamina and Provisions

Your STAMINA score will change a lot during your adventure as you confront colleagues and undertake draining administrative tasks. You begin with a Sad Bagged Lunch but may obtain other food throughout the day. You may rest and eat only when permitted in an entry. When you do, restore four (4) points of STAMINA and strike the food from your FRM-0001c. Taking a Caffeine Pill (see below) will restore six (6) points of STAMINA.

Luck

Taking an Antidepressant (see below) will restore three (3) points of LUCK.

Remember: Your SKILL, STAMINA, and LUCK scores can never exceed their *Initial* values unless specifically instructed on a page.

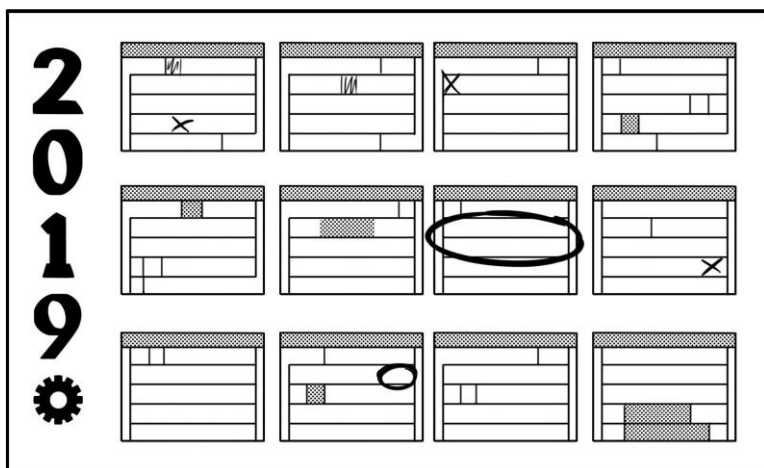
Time

Time is relative, but you still have a limited well. Every delay and obstacle have the potential to put you catastrophically behind schedule. If you fall too far behind, you'll be woefully unprepared for the end of the day, but neither should you blithely rush ahead—do so and you will miss vital encounters and information. To help avoid this, you must keep track of TIME.

Your FRM-0001c has a TIME box. Write “24” inside. You'll be instructed to deduct one or more points from your TIME score as the day progresses. Each point of time represents roughly fifteen to twenty minutes.

As soon as your TIME reaches zero, you are Out of Time.

If you ever run Out of Time, turn to **92**.



Merit

It's difficult to fail outright in the Civil Service but equally difficult to achieve anything tangible. Your performance during this adventure turns on earning MERIT. Your MERIT score starts at zero and increases by achieving measurable results. Be warned, you can also lose MERIT for underperforming or behaving in a manner unbecoming a Civil Servant.

Unlike SKILL, STAMINA, and LUCK, your MERIT score can fall below zero. If it does, it becomes a negative number, returning to zero or a positive number if you earn back enough points.

Your performance will be rated at the end of the adventure based on your final MERIT score. See **Appendix 2: Performance Review** for more information.



Equipment and Medications

You start your adventure with a bare minimum of equipment but may find other items throughout the day. You are armed with a government-issued Cell-phone, ID Badge, and Laptop and are dressed business casual with a pair of sensible shoes. You have a bag (big purse, backpack, satchel, etc.) over your shoulder to hold your Sad Bagged Lunch, Folding Umbrella, and any items you come across throughout the day. You have a bit of Pocket Change, enough for a coffee and maybe a day-old muffin.

In addition, you may choose one pill to rattle around the bottom of your bag to aid you on your quest. You may only choose *one* of these three pills, so choose wisely!

A Painkiller—restores 3 SKILL points

A Caffeine Pill—restores 6 STAMINA points

An Antidepressant—restores 3 LUCK points

This pill may be taken at any time during your adventure except during a Confrontation. Once used, strike the pill from your FRM-0001c.



How to Cheat Fairly

Maybe you're a casual player and just want to find out what happens in the story. Maybe you find these sorts of books off-putting. I get it, you just want to read the jokes and enjoy the ambiance. Below are a few cheats to get you through. Just be sure your probationary period is over if you use them or you might get fired.

Story Mode

You win every test and Confrontation without even glancing at dice. You might not dominate the book in just one playthrough, but you'll get close. Close enough for government work.

A Finger in Time

When flipping to a new entry, leave a couple fingers in the last section. If you don't like the outcome (you were only curious, after all), flip back and try again.

Hints on Play

Make notes and flowchart your progress. Unlike a Civil Service critical path, this chart will be useful and enable you to rapidly progress in subsequent playthroughs. Like any government endeavour, success comes slowly if at all and rarely on the first try.

Record of Adventure (FRM-0001c)

Confidential once completed

Note: Consult your H.R. Advisor before submitting this form.

Section 1: Personal Information				
<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Cancellation	Office Use Only	
1. Name: [REDACTED]				
2. Personal Identifier: [REDACTED]				
Section 1.1: Merit and Time				
3. MERIT		4. TIME (<i>At zero, turn to 92</i>)		
Section 1.2: Core Competencies				
5. SKILL <i>Initial:</i>	6. STAMINA (<i>At zero, turn to 344</i>) <i>Initial:</i>		7. LUCK <i>Initial:</i>	
Section 1.3: Possessions and Documents				
8. POSSESSIONS				
<i>Cellphone</i>	<i>Spare Change</i>			
<i>Laptop</i>	<i>Pill:</i>			
<i>ID Badge</i>	<i>Folding umbrella</i>			
9. PROVISIONS				
<i>Sad Bagged Lunch</i>				
10. DOCUMENTS				
<i>Briefing Material</i>				
Section 2: Notes				
11. NOTES				

Record of Adventure (FRM-0001c)

Confidential once completed

Note: Employees must complete Harassment and Violence Prevention (WP100).

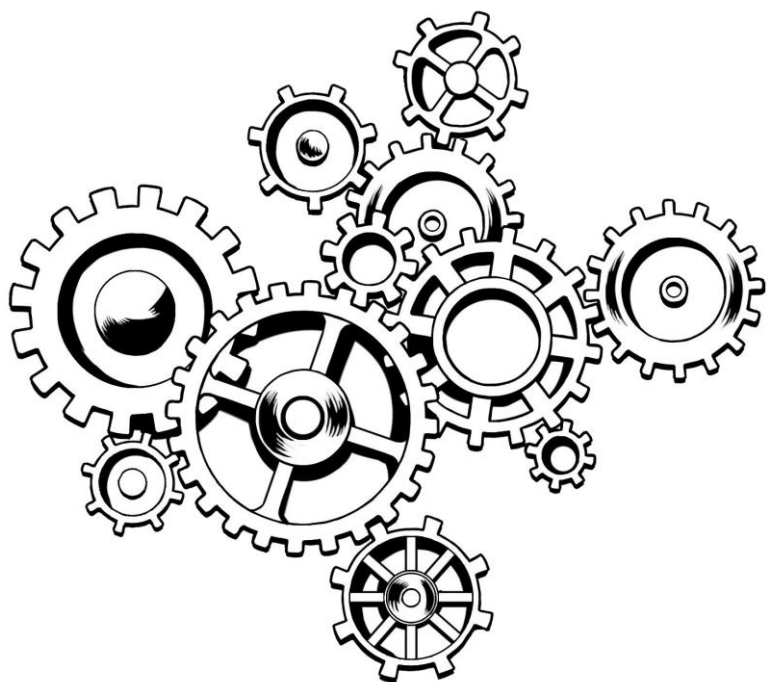
Section 3: Encounter Boxes

1-a:		1-b:		1-c:	
Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:

2-a:		2-b:		2-c:	
Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:

3-a:		3-b:		3-c:	
Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:

4-a:		4-b:		4-c:	
Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:	Skill:	Stamina:



Briefing Note

Background

You are a Policy Analyst, a small but ubiquitous cog in the cyclopean organization that is the Civil Service. Governments come and go but the Civil Service endures; you endure—have endured for six long years. You work in the Policy Implementation Directorate (P.I.D.) of the Innovation Branch (I.B.), the mandate of which is to streamline and modernize all of government. No easy feat.

The I.B. is part of the Innovation and Inter-Governmental Affairs Department (I.A.I.G.A.D.). No one pronounces I.A.I.G.A.D. the same way. You suspect a proper pronunciation might call forth an otherworldly entity from a hell plane of shifting policy tides and endless mandatory forms. It's your job to fight these very things.

Current Situation

Serving in a variety of positions, you have amassed a trove of corporate knowledge and transferable skills. This has earned you a reputation as a “doer.” While ensuring your rise from entry-level Clerk to Acting Policy Analyst, your Doer Status has also made you essential to Management. That means you're on their radar. Indispensable. In demand.

Your reward has been an acting assignment, a bump in pay, and ten times your normal workload. When word got out that you could actually do things, you were writing every document, leading every working group, and making every call—essentially, doing all the things no one else had time for anymore. Only, now you're in the same boat: a boat lost in a bureaucratic sea and far from life's calm harbour.

Considerations

It's been a hard six months. Late nights, dinners interrupted by phone calls, and conversations half-heard over urgent work texts have left you isolated, drained, and demoralized. Your unit is understaffed; it has more empty boxes than an electronics store on Black Friday. Your director was seconded to another department a month ago, leaving your senior analyst to work both jobs with nary an advisor in sight. You'd leave it all behind, but no one gets total benefits, ironclad job security, and a pension anymore.

In twenty-nine years, you'll be set.

At least summer holidays are here, but that means even fewer people to do a growing pile of work. Worse, the government's Albatross Pay System left you without a paycheque *again*. You can't even afford a coffee without going into overdraft. Your finances are a teetering Jenga tower that's more air than Alder wood; one false move and...

But things are looking up. It's Friday, and you squared away your draft Government Innovation Report (the Report). You spent years on it, poured your heart and soul into recommendations supported by solid evidence and skillful analysis. Your conclusions are bold, and your solutions will cut bureaucracy and streamline needlessly complex procedures government wide.

Best of all, you finally got through to a responsive Pay Centre rep yesterday, one who was sure they could work out your issue. Just in time. You start a long overdue vacation tomorrow. By the time you get back your manager/director will have brought in TWO fresh-faced Co-op Students, the ultimate salve for a swelling governmental workload. They should have started a month ago but, well, paperwork.

Next Steps

You grab your keys and Spare Change, shoulder your bag, and head out the door. Things will turn around. You just need to get through today.

How hard could it be?

Recommendation

Turn the page.



1. *The Darby Complex is a drab, concrete brutalist campus.*

1

It's July 5, 2019, and you're pressed against the sliding doors of a CityTranspo train. Your forehead bumps the window with every lurch and jostle. Heavy rain droplets batter and stream across the glass. It's warm outside and the rain has only made it stickier, enhancing the compartment's warm baloney smell. You gaze at the rusted tracks streaking by. An inch of aluminum, plastic, and dodgy, municipally outsourced pneumatics stand between you and a gruesome death. There are no handholds, but also no need since your compartment is jammed with wet passengers staring anywhere but at one another. It's a holiday week, meaning the crowd should be thinner, but CityTranspo has cut service to maximize bottlenecks and passenger discomfort.

The C-train rounds a bend, its wheels shrieking like low-grade steel souls being dragged down the tracks to hell. The force of the turn presses your nose into the window. The train straightens aggressively, sending you into the backpack of the person behind you and the shoulder of the person to your right. None of you say a thing; the mutual support is understood.

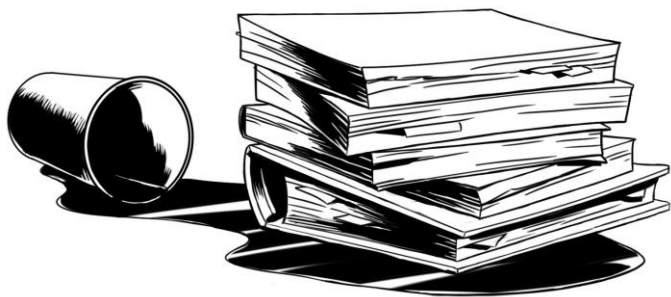
Assuming a slightly steadier posture, you look at the impression your face left on the glass and adjust your damp bag. The corner of the laptop inside has worked its way into your hip for a third time. You wipe the fog from the window as your office hoves into view. The

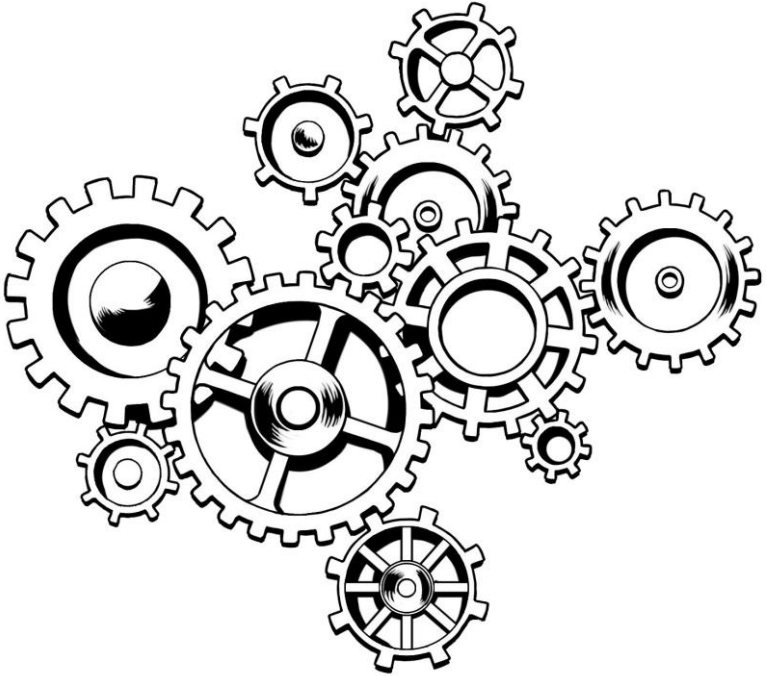
Darby Complex. Its main tower rises into the dark, troubled sky, its lower floors shielded behind the smoked glass breezeway connecting the buildings around it.

Known as The Citadel to its inmates, the Darby Complex is a drab, concrete brutalist campus more akin to a medieval fortification than a modern place of work. Built in 1967, the Citadel is anything but modern. Packed with asbestos, bad wiring, old pipes, and with air quality equivalent to a dank, rat-infested dungeon, the only reason the Complex hasn't been condemned is because, sure, it would leave thousands of civil servants without a place of work, but, more importantly, no government could survive the political fallout of a costly retrofit.

The train bucks and screeches as it approaches Darby Station.

Test your Luck. If you're Lucky, turn to **201**. If you're Unlucky, turn to **151**.







151. A bright-eyed nurse leans into your field of view.

151

You come to in brightness and pain. Something's pushing on your chest and draped over your neck. Your arms and legs won't move. You focus blearily on a room full of beds, floor-to-ceiling curtains, and rhythmically beeping machines. A series of lines, pullies, and casts have turned you into a living construction site. You groan but it's only a dry, scratchy whisper. A perky, bright-eyed nurse in pastel purple scrubs leans into your field of view. "Welcome to the Land of the Living!" he says altogether too cheerfully.

"Nghuuuh," you reply.

"You'll be okay, the doctors fixed you up. You're lucky you weren't in the first car!"

Ah, sent to Traction courtesy of CityTranspo. You wonder if you can get that on a t-shirt and chuckle, then grimace as things not meant to grind do so with gusto.

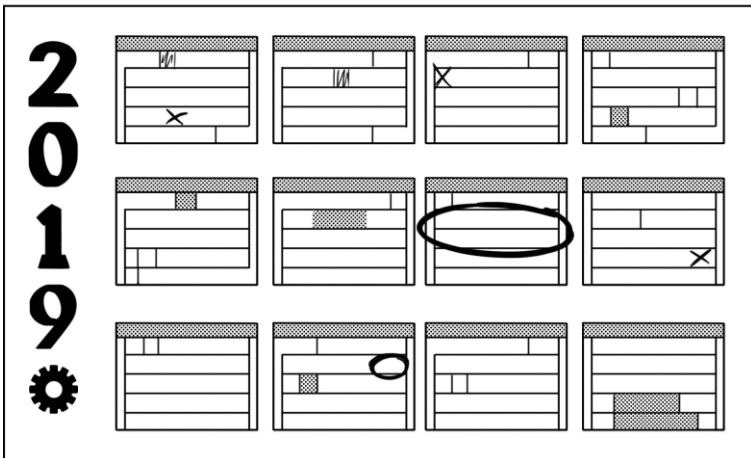
"Meds wearing off? Don't worry, the doctor gave you the good stuff."

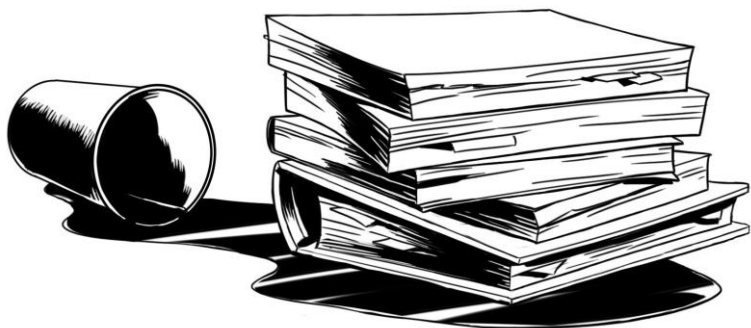
He fiddles with something out of your field of view. Whatever it is, it's good. It takes you to a fluffy cloud without worry or pain. Catastrophic accident victim? Who cares, not if you've got this stuff.

Ah, CityTranspo. It was only a matter of time before the C-Train went off the rails big-time. You chuckle again but there's no pain now. You're surprised an accident

this bad hadn't happened before now. There can only be so many "minor derailments" before someone gets seriously hurt. Unfortunately, that someone is you. At least you weren't killed, or maybe that too is unfortunate. You're certainly going to think so when struggling to use your limbs and go to the bathroom again. Pain won't be a problem, though, not with your glorious new addiction. And look, an AMBULANCE-CHASING GHOUL is stalking your way. He's got the widest smile you've ever seen, one that says you'll never have to work again. Maybe that's just the Fentanyl.

You could turn to **Appendix 2: Performance Review** if you want, but maybe consider getting this adventure back on track by turning to **201** instead. I won't tell, it'll be our secret.





201

The C-train pulls into Darby Station, a retro-modern building of glass, concrete, and harsh fluorescents. Its riveted steel roof slopes into the sky with the futurism of a V-1 rocket's launch ramp. The train grinds to a halt and its doors open, spilling passengers onto the platform. It reeks of urine. Why does this station always smell like a latrine? Because someone used it as a toilet, that's why.

Your mind turns from public micturition to the tasks ahead. It being a holiday Friday means fewer bodies to do the usual amount of work. Only sad sacks, workaholics, and bureaucratic casualties will be in today. You hope it's quiet so you can clear your desk, and maybe, just maybe, cut out a bit early. You've just got to work out your pay issue, wrap up a couple long overdue projects, and turn on your out-of-office replies. It should be an easy day.

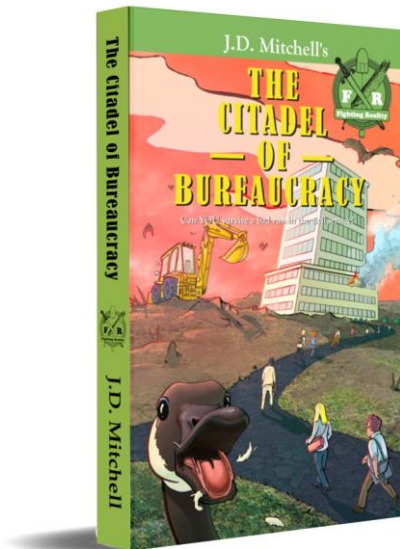
You go up the concrete steps two at a time. An obelisk of an informational display indicates that your train is fifteen minutes behind schedule. How a couple railed cars on a single line can run behind schedule is beyond you. At least you weren't in another derailment. Lose 1 TIME.

How do you want to get to the office?

The side lot, your usual shortcut Turn to **225**

The main exit and long way around Turn to **375**

Order your copy today!



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