

Unnatural Selection: A Fable for Our Times

The sickness did not come all at once. It did not arrive as a sudden plague or a cataclysmic disaster. It had been growing in the nation's soil for centuries, waiting for the right moment to bloom. This was a country founded on conquest, on slavery, on the belief that some people were worth less than others. From its earliest days, it had justified its rise by diminishing the humanity of those who stood in its way—enslaving millions, driving out indigenous peoples, erasing entire cultures with the stroke of a pen and the barrel of a gun. Even after slavery was abolished, the hatred endured. The formerly enslaved remained inferior in the eyes of those who had once owned them, subjected to new forms of persecution and injustice. This deep-rooted division spread beyond race; over time, anyone who was different—because of their skin color, their beliefs, their love—was treated as lesser, as something to be feared. Religious fanaticism took root alongside this history of division. Charismatic preachers, intoxicated by their own righteousness, promised salvation to those who obeyed and damnation to those who questioned. They built empires of blind faith, drawing in the desperate, the ignorant, and those too afraid to think for themselves. They convinced millions that doubt was sin, that science was a trick of the devil, that their nation was chosen by God. It was in this fertile ground—this history of division, this worship of ignorance, this distrust of knowledge—that the sickness found its home. And when it finally took hold, it spread faster than anyone could have imagined.

The Rise of the Sickness

It began with small things—subtle lapses in logic, a creeping disdain for complexity. Scientists spoke of approaching environmental crises, but their warnings were drowned out by laughter and casual dismissal. Experts and people of learning were now seen as the new charlatans, the distributors of fake news, and distorted truths. Then, the changes accelerated. The more the virus spread, the more its victims embraced their affliction.

Misinformation became gospel. Ignorance became virtue. Those who knew the least spoke the loudest, while those with knowledge were ridiculed, accused of elitism, or worse—conspiracy. The most chilling symptom, however, was the certainty. The stupider a person became, the more convinced they were of their own brilliance. Debates became impossible. Facts could be invented and reinvented at the whim of the speaker. The truth one day became a lie the next. Every discussion ended with the same smug refrain: “You have nothing to teach me.”

Soon, all evidence contradicting their delusions was dismissed as false news, a hoax engineered by shadowy forces. Scientists were labeled frauds. Historians were accused of rewriting the past. Doctors were shunned as agents of deception. To question the stupidity was to reveal oneself as the enemy. At first, the infected had no leader. They were simply a mass of angry voices, rejecting anything that required thought or reflection. But nature abhors a vacuum, and soon, one man emerged from the chaos—a man as stupid as the rest, but with a rare and dangerous cunning. His name hardly mattered. He spoke in half-sentences, in grunts and slogans, in words so empty they could mean anything to anyone. He made ignorance sound like wisdom, pettiness like strength. His lies were too brazen to be questioned, too ridiculous to be real. And yet, his followers adored him. To the healthy—the ones still

capable of reason—he was a clown, a grotesque caricature of leadership. Surely, they thought, no one would take him seriously. But that was their mistake. They underestimated the sickness. They believed logic and decency would prevail. They waited, believing that the fever would break on its own. It did not.

The Leader's Ascent

With every outrage, every lie, the leader grew bolder. He stole, cheated, and failed spectacularly, but it only made his followers love him more. When the media exposed his corruption, he laughed. When the courts tried to hold him accountable, he ignored them. And when scientists and scholars warned of impending catastrophe, he mocked them. His followers had long since stopped believing in facts. Truth was whatever he said it was. By the time the rational citizens realized the depth of the crisis, the machinery of democracy had already been hollowed out. They had failed to recognize the threat in time. Even though the leader had made his intentions explicit before his election, the reasonable people and the media did not take him seriously. And after he was elected, they continued to follow established norms, believing in rules he had no intention of obeying.

Comedians and commentators saw him as a buffoon, a source of humor rather than danger. And while they were distracted—outraged by his daily tirades, consumed by his endless scandals, reeling from his blatant abuses of power—his most loyal followers worked in the shadows. They infiltrated the courts, reshaped the legislature, and rewrote the laws in his favor. At first, they chipped away at term limits, bending rules, twisting interpretations, claiming that the “will of the people” demanded their leader remain in power. Then, with one final, decisive blow, they struck down the very heart of the constitution that had upheld the nation since its inception.

Through propaganda, intimidation, and sheer force, they orchestrated a national vote—one riddled with fraud, coercion, and deception—that enshrined him as ruler for life. No longer a mere president, he was now something more. King, Emperor, Supreme Leader—it did not matter. The nation had crossed the final threshold. The people had sealed their fate.

The World Turns Away

As the leader cemented his hold on power, he turned his gaze outward. The alliances that had once kept his country strong, that had secured peace and prosperity for generations, were suddenly beneath him. He saw cooperation as weakness, diplomacy as surrender. He insulted longtime allies, mocked their leaders, and sabotaged treaties that had taken decades to build. He threatened neighboring nations—countries that had stood beside his own through war and crisis—as if they were enemies to be conquered. At first, world leaders tried to reason with him. They thought he could be contained, that rational discussion could temper his madness. But they soon saw the truth: there was no reasoning with a man who thrived on chaos. His word meant nothing, his promises vanished as soon as they were spoken.

Realizing they could no longer depend on the once-great nation as an ally, the world began to shift. The old order crumbled. A new one had to be built—without the pillar that had once held it together. And while the civilized world turned away from him, the leader sought new allies elsewhere. He courted the very dictators his nation had once opposed, men whose regimes thrived on oppression and fear. What did they have on him? No one could say for certain. Did they hold secrets—proof of past crimes, of debts unpaid, of loyalties that had never truly belonged to his homeland? Had they shaped him from the shadows, guiding his rise so they

could one day exploit his reign? Or did they simply recognize a kindred spirit — a man who, like them, saw power not as a responsibility, but as a weapon? Whatever the reason, the shift was unmistakable. He admired these strongmen, envied their unchecked control. He embraced them while turning his back on his own people. And still, his followers cheered. They did not see the betrayal. Or perhaps they no longer cared. As long as he fed them their delusions, as long as he told them they were the chosen ones, they would follow him anywhere—even into ruin.

The Collapse

The world was watching, waiting, preparing. Something was coming. And when it did, no one would be spared. Something did come, but it was not what was expected. The leader was, in essence, a lazy man. He delighted in making outrageous and threatening statements, but he lacked the ability to create a real vision of what he wanted to achieve. He had neither the energy to follow up on his threats nor the intellectual capacity to plan the actions required to carry them out. He sought only to create chaos and mayhem. He had no vision beyond that. And soon, the rest of the world began to realize this. Though he had access to great power and resources, he had no idea how to wield them. At first, his bluster had made the world uneasy. He was a man who spoke of war, of destruction, of tearing down the old ways. But soon, they saw through him in a way his followers could not. The world began to ignore him, pushing him to the periphery of global affairs. This infuriated him, but he did not have the ability or intelligence to change it. Instead, he turned inward. If he could no longer bend the world to his will, he would set his wrath upon his own people. And so, the suffering truly began.

The Survivors

Once the leader turned inward, he found his next enemy: those who did not belong. He had always spoken of purity—of restoring the nation to what it had once been, though he never defined what that meant. Now, with no external enemies to distract him, he turned his full attention to the undesirables within his borders. First, he targeted what he called the “illegals.” It did not matter that many of them had lived in the country for decades, that they worked tirelessly in fields, factories, and service industries, that their labor kept the economy running. They had entered the country illegally, and that, in his eyes, made them criminals. Deportations began on a massive scale.

But soon, the definition of “illegal” began to shift. Legal immigrants—those who had arrived through the proper channels, who had built businesses, paid taxes, and raised families—became suspect. Their paperwork was scrutinized, their citizenship questioned, their status revoked over technicalities. And when the bureaucratic mechanisms were no longer enough, the process became simpler: if they looked foreign, if their names sounded foreign, if their ancestry could be traced to another land, they were no longer welcome. They were rounded up and deported.

At first, other nations protested. But the leader still had enough power, still controlled enough economic and political leverage, to force them into compliance. The countries of their ancestors took them back—some begrudgingly, some eagerly, seeing an opportunity to exploit the influx of displaced workers. For the descendants of the formerly enslaved, the solution was more complicated. There was nowhere to send them. They had been in the country for centuries, but they had never been fully accepted

as part of it. And now, in the leader's eyes, they were an infection—one that could not be expelled but could be contained.

Segregation laws returned under a different name, cloaked in rhetoric about “heritage,” “purity,” and “tradition.” Entire communities were forcibly relocated, pushed to the margins of society. Their neighborhoods were stripped of funding, their schools left to rot, their access to public services cut off. Businesses that served them were denied permits, their rights eroded by a thousand bureaucratic knives. They were not officially exiled, but they may as well have been.

The same fate awaited all who did not conform—people of different sexual orientations, political dissidents, journalists who dared to speak against the regime. They became pariahs in their own homeland, shunned, hunted, driven into hiding or exile. Resistance existed. There were protests, underground movements, desperate attempts to push back. But opposition forces were disorganized, fractured. Some feared reprisal, others struggled to unite under a single cause. Their leaders were undermined, assassinated, or turned into examples of what happened to those who dared to resist.

One by one, the voices of dissent fell silent. And still, the people cheered. They watched their neighbors disappear, their friends lose their homes, their coworkers vanish without explanation. But they did not question. They did not mourn. The sickness had taken them fully, and in their eyes, everything was unfolding as it should. The nation was finally being purified. And yet, even as the leader remade the country in his own twisted image, he was not satisfied. Because there was still one final enemy left to destroy. Those who dared to question his genius and the brilliance of all his decisions.

But those people had not been idle. The exodus began quietly at first, with only a few individuals— scientists, scholars, and thinkers —seeking refuge in other nations. But as the dictator’s grip tightened, hope of resistance faded, and fear of reprisal increased the trickle became a flood. The educated, the skilled, and the innovators abandoned their homeland en masse, carrying their knowledge and expertise with them. They were welcomed wherever they went, their new host countries recognizing their value instantly. As they settled elsewhere, they strengthened the nations that took them in, enriching economies, revitalizing universities, and pioneering advancements in science and technology.

Meanwhile, their home country, once built on immigration, now suffered the irony of being devastated by emigration. The very minds that had sustained its progress were gone, leaving behind a nation spiraling further into ignorance and decay. The leader and his followers welcomed the exodus, blind to its consequences. To them, it was a purging of dissent, a clearing of the path for total domination. They saw the departure of intellectuals as a victory, failing to grasp that they were accelerating their own decline. Even as their nation withered, they cheered, convinced that they were finally rid of the traitors, the doubters, the ones who had dared to think.

The Final Descent

Though the transformation of the country had felt sudden in its early days, the final collapse was a slow, grinding descent. The leader had established a dynasty, ensuring that his family’s grip on power would extend beyond his own lifetime. His son, raised in the shadow of his father’s reign, inherited the nation at a time when the sickness of ignorance had fully consumed the population. The

institutions that had once upheld knowledge and progress were either dismantled or repurposed into tools of propaganda.

Education had long since ceased to be a means of enlightenment; it was now an apparatus for indoctrination. With each passing year, the country grew more insular. Having long since cut ties with its former allies, it no longer participated in the progress of the world. Science and innovation withered. Industries that had once driven the economy crumbled as the workforce—no longer trained, no longer capable—grew increasingly inept.

Those who had not fled lived in a world of decay, but they did not question it. They had been taught that everything was as it should be, that the hardships they faced were the fault of outsiders, of traitors, of enemies lurking in the shadows. By the time the leader's grandson ascended to power, the country was a hollow shell of its former self. Where great cities had once thrived, ruins stood. Infrastructure had collapsed. The once-mighty economy had atrophied to a barter system in some places, reliant on what little remained of old industry and black-market dealings.

The natural world, too, had suffered under generations of mismanagement. The forests were stripped bare, the rivers choked with waste, the air thick with pollution. The leaders of old had once promised greatness; what remained was squalor and ruin. Yet, in the final echoes of this decline, the grandson of the original leader stood upon his balcony, triumphant. "We are great again!" he screeched to the sea of ignorant faces below. And they cheered, because they knew nothing else.

But with no internal enemies left to demonize, the people began to turn on themselves. Factions formed, and new "others" seemed to materialize out of nowhere. The Great Leader continued to fan the flames of hatred, turning one group against another, ensuring the

people never ran out of enemies to fight. Vigilante mobs roamed the streets, hunting down perceived traitors—sometimes former friends, sometimes neighbors, sometimes family. Accusations of disloyalty became death sentences.

Paranoia gripped the nation like a vice, and the executions never ceased. The last remnants of the broken education system collapsed. Schools that once taught even the most rudimentary lessons were reduced to propaganda centers where children parroted the leader's name in trembling voices.

The medical system, long starved of funding and expertise, fell into ruin. With no doctors left to treat them, the sick turned to wandering charlatans, snake oil peddlers, and faith healers who promised miracles for a price. Plagues swept through the land, but the people, too ignorant to understand what caused them, called them divine punishment. Religious hysteria gripped the most desperate. Prophets declared the end of days, and entire towns succumbed to mass suicide. They gathered in fields, in churches, in underground bunkers, convinced their deaths would grant them salvation. Tens of thousands perished this way.

The factions multiplied, splintering further into warring sects. Villages and neighborhoods turned into battlefields, each group convinced that the others were the true traitors. Homes were burned, families ripped apart. In the streets, mobs lynched suspected dissidents. Wild rumors polluted the airwaves, each more outlandish than the last. The few remaining scholars and thinkers were hunted down, accused of sorcery, their bodies hung from makeshift gallows as a warning to those who dared to think.

Religious fanatics, claiming divine revelation, seized entire towns, forcing conversions under threat of execution. Mass hysteria gripped the land, and hundreds of cults rose overnight, each with

its own prophecy. Their leaders promised paradise, urging their followers to drink poison or set themselves alight. Tens of thousands perished in these ritual suicides, their corpses left to rot as grim monuments to madness. The destruction neared completion.

The Great Leader retired to his protected enclave with his closest minions, basking in self-congratulation, unaware—or perhaps indifferent—to the smoldering ruins outside his gates. The leader, now an old man, continued his empty broadcasts, praising his own genius and declaring victory over enemies long since vanished. His inner circle, those still clinging to survival, nodded and applauded, their expressions frozen in fear-driven adoration. They told him of his greatness, of his eternal wisdom, of how his people still adored him.

But then, one day, something shattered the illusion. In the midst of a speech he was broadcasting to the millions who were no longer there, his TV monitor flickered and went dark. The only thing left was his own reflection—staring back at him from the abyss of the screen. He froze. His mouth opened, but no words came. For the first time in his life—indeed, for the first time in three generations—the leader felt doubt and a brief moment of self-awareness. With eyes wide with horror he looked to his advisors, seeking reassurance, but they only stared back, silent and empty-eyed, their faces hollow with exhaustion. He saw the fear in them, the weight of decades spent propping up a crumbling world. Their bodies were thin, their spirits drained, their loyalty nothing more than habit. Slowly, he turned back to the screen. His own reflection wavered in the flickering glow, its face unfamiliar.

The color drained from his cheeks. His eyes widened, not with understanding, but with terror. "Is that me?" he whispered at the emptiness. And those were the last words he ever spoke. He stood

there for hours, unmoving, staring into the void. When someone finally worked up the courage to guide him to a chair, he did not resist. He simply sat, silent, his body rigid, his mind lost in whatever abyss had opened before him. He neither lived nor died—he simply ceased to be. His last remaining followers slinked away, disappearing back into the rat holes from which they had first emerged with many of them popping up in distant lands promising to tell their stories in exchange for liberty.

The heir presumptive was murdered in his sleep. The empty screen continued to flicker in the silent room. Though the outside world had long anticipated the final demise of the once-great land, when the end finally came, they did nothing. There was no invasion, no occupation, no attempt to claim its ruins. Powerful nations that could have seized its resources instead chose restraint.

The global community came to an unspoken agreement: the land would belong to no one. It would be as Antarctica—a place where no flag would fly, open only to those who sought to study and understand the folly that had unfolded.

And so, the land became a vast, open-air tomb, a cautionary tale for those who wished to walk its abandoned streets and sift through the bones of its ruined cities. Scientists, historians, and researchers arrived, piecing together the story of a civilization that had willfully unmade itself. They documented the rise and fall, the hubris, the sickness of the mind that had spread like a plague. They traced the arc of a people who had once reached for the stars, only to collapse beneath the weight of their own self-inflicted ignorance.

But as they pushed deeper into the interior, past the rusting husks of cities and the wastelands left behind by centuries of greed, they found something unexpected. Rejuvenation. The people who had

been pushed to the periphery—the ones deemed unworthy, unseen, unwanted—had survived. The indigenous peoples, those who had lived on these lands since time immemorial, had retreated into the places the sickened ones had dismissed as worthless but that they knew could sustain them. They had watched from the edges as the old world tore itself apart, knowing better than to interfere. And when the final embers of that world faded, they remained.

They were not alone. Among them were the descendants of the enslaved, those whose ancestors had been uprooted and brutalized, yet who had endured. Together, these survivors had formed something new, though in truth, it was something very old. They had returned to the ways that had sustained them before the sickness arrived—living with the land, not against it. The forests grew thicker, the rivers ran clearer, the soil became fertile once again. All that had been poisoned by greed, began to heal.

They had found refuge in the lands the foolish had deemed worthless. Together, they had reclaimed forgotten traditions, caring for the earth, nurturing the land, and restoring balance. They asked nothing from the outsiders, and the outsiders, in turn, left them alone. The healing had begun, and it was not theirs to interfere with.

Conclusion

The story of the once-great nation serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of division, ignorance, and unchecked power. It is a cautionary tale of how a society can unravel when it turns its back on reason, empathy, and justice. Yet, amidst the ruins, there is hope. The survivors, those who had been pushed to the margins, found a way to endure and rebuild. Their resilience and connection

to the land offer a glimmer of light in the darkness, a testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit. The world watched, learned, and vowed never to repeat the mistakes of the past. And so, the story of the fallen nation became a lesson for all humanity—a warning and a call to action.