

The Salvation

Libertalia
The First Digital Nation

BOOK I

The Salvation

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Dedicated to my wife,
who never stopped
supporting every crazy dream of mine.

Luc

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THE WORK

LIBERTALIA

The First Digital Nation

LIBERTALIA, by **Luc Arden**, is a single work developed through **three separate books**, each of which approaches the same idea from a different perspective.

BOOK I

THE SALVATION

In the first book, the author recounts the journey of **Mike Harris**, a simple, ordinary man who decides to challenge what is taken for granted.

Faced with powerful interests, structures of power, and a world that seems impossible to change, Mike attempts to turn an idea into a vision: the creation of a world that is freer, fairer, and more humane.

THE SALVATION is the story through which the vision of Libertalia is born.

BOOK II

THE LOST CHAPTER

In the second book, the author uses two of the story's main characters—**Mike** and his wife—to explore a different question:

Could Mike's vision become a reality in today's world?

THE LOST CHAPTER attempts to bridge fiction and reality, describing a possible path through which an idea could gradually evolve into something real.

BOOK III
THE WAY TO LIBERTY
In Three Volumes

In the third book, the vision moves from theory to structure.

The author attempts to set out the **principles, rules, and institutions** that could support a different way of organizing society.

Across the three volumes of **THE WAY TO LIBERTY**, issues are examined concerning democracy, justice, the economy, technology, artificial intelligence, everyday life, and the social changes that may shape the future.

At the same time, the work attempts to address questions that the pace of technological and social evolution is already creating—even when today’s institutions have not yet had time to provide answers.

THE WAY TO LIBERTY represents the attempt to transform Mike’s dream from an idea into a comprehensive framework of principles for a different world.

Perhaps the Beginning of It All

The location and the country in which the story takes place have been chosen at random.

The purpose of this book is not simply to tell the story of an ordinary person or to entertain the reader.

It is to make the reader pause for a moment and reflect on the world that is coming.

Our lives are already changing.

Artificial Intelligence, technology, the economy, work, power, and even the very concept of freedom are transforming at a pace humanity may never have known before. Within this transition, this book—together with the second book (The Lost Chapter) and the third book, in three volumes (The Way to Liberty)—attempts something more than simply telling a story:

It attempts to serve as a possible guide toward a different future.

That is why its essence does not lie in the perfection of its language or words. **It lies in the ideas breathing behind them.**

In the questions they give rise to.

In challenging what we now take for granted.

The aim is for the reader not merely to read about change, but **to see it, feel it, and experience it** through the story.

The three books do not claim to know what humanity's future should be. **They do, however, suggest that there may be another path.**

A path toward a world that is freer, fairer, more humane. And perhaps the greatest idea hidden within these pages is, in the end, very simple:

Freedom does not begin when someone else changes the world for us.

It begins the moment we believe that a different world can truly exist.

If these three books manage to make even one person look at the future differently, then **they have already achieved something important.**

Because every great change, before becoming reality, **was first an idea.**

And every idea, at some point, needed people who dared to believe in it.

CHAPTER ONE

Another Empty Day

Apartment 101

Another day.

The same.

Empty.

Mike poured a little tea into a cracked mug and sat at the small kitchen table, staring at the bills spread beside him like evidence of a crime he couldn't remember committing.

The electricity bill was almost equal to his salary.

His health insurance had expired two weeks earlier.

The rent was due in four days.

At the edge of the table, beneath a souvenir magnet from a holiday he could barely remember, lay a final notice printed in red. He had opened it the night before, read the first two lines, then folded it back exactly as it had arrived, as though returning

it to the shape of its envelope might somehow return the problem to someone else.

It couldn't.

The apartment was silent except for the low hum of the refrigerator and the distant noise of traffic already pushing the city towards dawn. Somewhere outside, people had begun to move. Engines starting. Doors closing. Elevators stopping at every floor.

Another army of tired bodies leaving home to earn enough to make it back again.

Mike wrapped both hands around the mug.

The tea was scalding, but he drank it anyway.

He had stopped putting sugar in it months ago.

Not for his health.

For the money.

It was a ridiculous way to save — almost nothing, the kind of thing no one with a normal life would ever notice. But Mike noticed everything now. The sugar. The bus fare. The heating. A second bottle of milk. A packet of biscuits the children liked.

Small things had become decisions.

And decisions had become guilt.

On the chair beside him lay the uniform from his first job: dark trousers, a white shirt, black shoes polished just enough, because he no longer had the patience to make anything look better than it was. Across the room, hanging from the bedroom door handle, was the jacket for his second job.

Delivery.

Nights.

Weekends.

Rain or heat, it didn't matter. People still ordered food. They still wanted things brought to them quickly. They still complained if the coffee was cold.

He worked two jobs and still counted coins.

Sometimes he counted them silently so Jane wouldn't hear.

Sometimes he pretended he was just searching his pockets.

Sometimes he left the last coin on the kitchen counter, hoping one of the children would think it had always been there.

That was the part that made no sense.

He wasn't lazy. He wasn't irresponsible. He wasn't waiting for anyone to save him. He woke before sunrise, came home after dark, answered every message, paid what he could, postponed what he couldn't, and apologised to people richer, slower, and less tired than he was.

And yet every month ended the same way.

A number on a screen.

A balance too small.

A life too expensive.

Mike looked at his phone.

6:12 a.m.

He had eighteen minutes before he had to leave.

Eighteen minutes of silence before the city took him back.

He opened the banking app, even though he already knew what it would say. The screen loaded slowly, as though even the machine were ashamed to show him the truth.

Available balance: 43.18

He stared at it.

Forty-three pounds and eighteen pence.

That was what remained after twenty-two days of work.

Not enough to feel safe.

Too much to say he had nothing.

That was the cruelest kind of poverty: the kind that still forced you to calculate.

He closed the app.

For a moment, he imagined throwing the phone against the wall and smashing it to pieces. Not because the phone was the problem, but because it was the only thing small enough to break.

You couldn't break the rent.

You couldn't break the tax.

You couldn't break the insurance, the debt, the interest, the fuel, the food, the electricity, the forms, the fines, the signatures, the rules, the queues, the codes, the verifications, and the thousand invisible hands reaching into a man's pocket before he had even had the chance to touch his own money.

All you could do was sit at a table and drink cheap tea.

The kettle clicked behind him even though it had already boiled.

The sound made him flinch.

He hated that about himself.

Lately, every small sound entered his body like bad news.

He stood, picked up the electricity bill, and read it again. Not because he expected it to change, but because people have a strange habit of rereading disasters, as though somewhere between the numbers there might be mercy.

There wasn't.

Amount due: 1,184.76

A short laugh escaped him.

Not a real laugh.

The kind that comes out when anger has nowhere else to go.

His salary from the hotel was 1,220 before deductions. After tax, insurance, transport, food, and everything else the world demanded from him for the privilege of continuing to breathe inside it, almost nothing remained.

The bill alone was a month of mornings.

A month on his feet.

A month of yes sir, no sir, sorry sir.

A month of smiling at strangers who looked straight through him.

He set the paper back on the table with unusual care, as though it were fragile.

Then he looked around the apartment.

There was nothing terrible about it. That was the worst part. It wasn't a prison cell. It had a window, a sofa, a bed, a kitchen, a bathroom, a shelf of books he hadn't opened in years. It had everything a normal life was supposed to have, and yet it felt like a room designed only for recovery between punishments.

Sleep here.

Wake up here.

Pay for this here.

Leave here.

Work.

Return.

Repeat.

Mike picked up his shirt and put it on.

The fabric was cold.

In the bathroom mirror, he barely recognised the man staring back at him.

Forty-three years old.

Not old enough to give up.

Not young enough to believe effort alone would change anything.

His beard needed trimming. His eyes needed rest. His face carried the expression of someone who had spent far too long explaining himself—to banks, landlords, managers, his wife, his children, and eventually to himself.

He brushed his teeth, splashed water on his face, and stood still for a moment with both hands braced against the sink.

A thought came to him.

It came often now, always in the same quiet voice.

This cannot be life.

Not in the dramatic way people imagine when they think a man is about to break.

There was no scream inside him.

No great collapse.

Only a quiet, ordinary thought.

The kind millions of people have before they put on their shoes, lock the door, and go to work anyway.

This cannot be life.

There had to be more to existence than paying to survive inside a system you had never agreed to enter. There had to be more than working so you could pay for the right to work again. There had to be more than being born somewhere, registered somewhere, taxed somewhere, monitored somewhere, and then being told this was freedom because you were allowed to complain about it.

He looked at his reflection.

“You’re late,” he whispered.

He didn’t know whether he meant work or something else.

At 6:31, he was outside.