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## LIFE IN 2040

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*This case involves a young character, Julie, immersed in a post-modern world where tensions are high and hybrid warfare mechanisms at full play. She is offered a career opportunity in a somewhat shady, yet stable job. After accepting it, she discovers that she may find herself at the heart of a foreign nation's efforts to seize assets from her home country.*

*The case walks the reader through the hardship of life in the context of climate deregulation, international tensions, and economic precariousness. Julie is portrayed as a representative of the younger generation and appears torn in a dilemma between two career paths, one of which would fulfill her values, and the other which would respond to her interests (should she be inclined to close her eyes to certain aspects of her employer's activities). Once she accepts this latter job opportunity, she starts unveiling the possible hidden agenda that she will be tasked with implementing. As she reflects whether to blow the whistle, she realizes that she is under surveillance and fears for her well-being.*

*This case study is particularly useful to show a diversity of hybrid warfare techniques used in conjunction with one another. It also bridges the gap between global politics and the life of an individual, offering this double focus on international affairs and their effect on the life of a particular citizen.*

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**Keywords:** Weaponization of an individual – Whistleblower – Economic warfare – Covert appropriation of natural resources – Futuristic scenario

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### Preamble

There is increasing division among populations and corporations as the fight to influence Western society continues to divide democratic nations. Disinformation is being created autonomously and is spread using sophisticated artificial intelligence programs across all social media platforms – sadly, the world is at war with itself. The culprits behind these big data exploits, which try to sway sentiment and incite division, come from all walks of life and may be led by powerful Big Tech influencers, and have adopted ideologies based on any number of factors. Social justice, environmental activism, financial activism, protest groups, radicalization, fanaticism, extremism, and terrorism all have a place in this conflict-prone environment.

With natural resources rapidly becoming more and more difficult to access, nations play the winner-takes-all game of supply chain domination. Conflict is everywhere and the threat of a global war becomes a sobering reality. How did things progress so subtly? What were the indicators and hidden actions that caused peaceful nations to undermine former trade partners and allies?

The multidimensional issues are rooted in the ever-changing needs of a growing global population, in historical differences and in an unwillingness to trust. Peace follows war, they say. Or perhaps the façade of a peaceful world is what most want to believe. Or as Thomas Jefferson observed, “peace is just an interlude in which everyone rearms.” Unlike the movie *The Matrix*, there are no red and blue pills to choose. You either go along with what governments and corporate enterprise decide your world is, or you see what is going on and act.

### 2040 Auslandia - Part One

Julie started the day in the normal way. After checking her phone to find out where she would be working, she got ready to travel into the city for face-to-face work. It was annoying to travel for two hours on public transport, but this was a condition of the government employment scheme that she and many under 40-year-olds were subjected to. Often, the under 40's were referred to as “the precariat” and Julie thought that this descriptor was

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<sup>1</sup> Tania Sourdin served as primary drafter.

appropriate. Work, food, shelter and survival were indeed precarious. Whilst some of her work was remote, there was still an insistence that regular face-to-face work be undertaken. At least there would be air conditioning.

It was hot. This was not unusual. Climate change meant that the temperature often reached 45°C / 113°F in summer. As Julie travelled in the hydrogen-powered bus, hoping that the latest wildfire crisis would not result in unbreathable air, she reflected on her current situation and the loss of what had been a promising career in the early 2030's.

Julie had started her career in the wine sector. After this "slowed down" because of the trade wars of the early 2030's, she shifted to working in the IT sector. This too "slowed down" after it became clear that most of the more advanced computer chips in the world were being stockpiled for who-knows-what, and as non-human AI workers increasingly dominated the sector. Her next shift was to the tourism sector. Unfortunately, climate change, together with restricted border movements, meant that only temporary and infrequent work was available.

How had this happened? Julie, at 30 years of age, was angry. She was particularly angry with the government of Auslandia who had, in the view of many, "poked the dragon" far too often.

The Auslandian government had worked hard to ignore climate change, but its activities in international relations had an additional and significant impact on Julie's generation.

Auslandia is a small country in the Asian Pacific region that occupies a strategic position. Over the past decade, many issues have arisen with a major trade partner (Plata) relating to a range of questions including ownership over islands, fishing rights, and incursions. These all seem to be linked to some initial criticism of Plata by Auslandia in relation to activities linked to contagion control in the latest pandemic. Some of these issues were raised in the context of Auslandia publicly supporting the stance taken by a major ally which was perceived to be critical of Plata.

In response, a trade war erupted in 2030. The characteristics of this trade war included raising tariffs, rejecting imported goods (with little notice), and threats to abandon well-established trade arrangements. In response, sanctions under international law were invoked and litigation has progressed over almost a decade.

At the same time, cyberattacks have been taking place across Auslandia for the same decade, with media reports suggesting that Plata-based entities are involved. In some instances, these have been referred to as "data wars," as major tech companies carved up assets around the world. There has also been a steady increase in the trading of insults on social media together with attempts to stir up public opinion.

As if trade quarrels and social media flame diplomacy were not enough, there has been some reference to conventional warfare with Plata, Auslandia, and its powerful ally engaging in war games and military shows of strength. There have been thinly veiled threats by Plata to take over or establish a larger footprint in neighboring countries.

Overall, the situation has no doubt been exacerbated by frequent government changes. Indeed, it seems likely that the current government of Auslandia will soon be ousted by a new political party.

Julie sighed as the bus slowed, and then came to a standstill, in the heavy city traffic. A woman about her age caught her eye, and they shared a resigned shrug. Julie felt a little better. It was not only her own career that was stalled, forcing her to put up with hours of commuting each week just to keep her position. It was just how things were, all over Auslandia.

Julie had never seen herself as being very political. However, her trip to the city today had a second purpose. After work, she would attend a rally downtown focusing on the “age wars.” She, like many others, was angry about how most of Auslandia’s resources were being spent on an aging population that claimed a vastly disproportionate share of those resources. Rallies had been cropping up in every city for the past few weeks, with people showing up in growing numbers. Julie had read a couple of social media posts about the early rallies and had deleted them, as she did with most political issue posts.

But yesterday, one social media post – she could not remember who posted it – showed up on her feed, announcing a rally taking place close to her workplace. The people protesting in the picture accompanying the announcement reminded her of her friends: about her age, professionally dressed, with tired, dejected faces expressing a spark of anger. Clicking “I’ll attend” seemed like the most natural thing in the world to do.

## **2040 Auslandia - Part Two**

Several days ago, Julie was quietly approached by a former university classmate named Daiyu. They had been close friends, though their career trajectories were very different. Daiyu Chong had studied international business and was now a rising executive in a well-regarded international trading company. She is one of several children of the company’s co-founder who now hold management roles – and compete with each other for promotion. They met for coffee at a small coffee shop, and at a quiet corner table spent the first hour remembering antics from their university days and chit-chatting about their families. Finally, over flat whites and Turkish toast with avocado, Daiyu cautiously asked Julie if she might be interested in taking a new position with her company.

Daiyu explained her company, Smith-Chong Investments, was working with prospective partners from Plata to pursue opportunities in the tourism sector, although Smith-Chong is also interested in rare-earth mining operations near Auslandia Springs. Julie was a skilled researcher and good writer who knew about tourism. Might Julie be interested in joining Smith-Chong to help ensure government and indigenous permissions were obtained?

Julie thanked Daiyu and said she was happy to be considered, and they agreed, pending further discussions about details, to meet again in a week.

Meanwhile, things are heating up elsewhere in the world. A new report released by the World Health Organization claimed that the global temperature has increased due in

part to pollution produced from coal mining industries. Julie is aware that Auslandia's contribution to this global problem is significant, and she is keen to do something about it. In her youth, she had participated in Greta Thunberg's Zoom rallies and seminars. But those efforts have not had any real impact on the practices of polluting industries. A help-wanted ad in the local newspaper struck her attention.

An alternative fuel company had positions open for a branch in her city. The salary was not competitive. Nor were they offering benefits such as sick leave, retirement fund contributions or paid vacation. And the company's offices were on the other side of the city, which would mean a substantial commute. Julie was caught in a dilemma with the push and pull of her need for secure employment and her strongly felt ideals.

Daiyu's opening presented an attractive option. That job would enable her to pay off debts. The alternative opportunity would give her life a meaning that would be missing or delayed if she pursued more lucrative options. Thinking that she had little to lose, Julie sent a letter of interest to the alternative fuel company.

A quick reply came with a telephone interview date in a few days. The interview went well, and she was offered the job, starting immediately. Before deciding, Julie called Daiyu to keep her informed of this development. Daiyu asked Julie to give her a day to consult with her company before deciding. Julie agreed and wondered why life can often be so complicated. And, so indeed it proved, when Daiyu scheduled an interview for Julie with Daiyu's boss. Julie thanked her but also asked for a favor: Could the interview take place tomorrow? That was agreed; the interview went well, and she received an attractive offer a few hours later with benefits and perks. Feeling stuck between two attractive options, Julie had to weigh the material benefits of one job against the moral benefits of the other. This was a classic "interests vs values" conflict.

### **2040 Auslandia - Part Three**

Julie made her decision: between her comfort with Daiyu and the well-known successes of Plata businesses globally, Smith-Chong seemed not only the most lucrative but also potentially the most future-career-oriented opportunity. Julie was hired as Smith-Chong's new Client Relations Director for Auslandia. She started immediately.

The following day, Julie attended her first day at her new job and was briefed by Daiyu and several company VPs on current ongoing initiatives, including three major investment deals close to conclusion. Her first assignment was to assess and help resolve an emerging real estate transaction. The other two investment initiatives, she was advised, could be placed on hold until the first one was resolved. The three projects are

1 – A Resort Complex: This involves the purchase of a large amount of land to build a world-class spa and resort complex providing a desert retreat, with casino facilities and an array of outdoor activities leveraging the great outdoor life. In essence, the new resort is eventually intended to be the new Las Vegas of Auslandia. The land being acquired belongs to the indigenous communities nearby and the clients are expected to be global, with a heavy reliance on the Plata tourist industry. Julie's task in this situation is to assist

the investors in developing good relationships with the local indigenous communities. However, while the indigenous communities seem very keen to facilitate this land transaction, some of the required permits appear to be delayed and the transaction seems to be stalled. There is even concern that some members of the indigenous communities may no longer support the land sale. The land is an area of about 30 x 60 km located approximately 25 kilometers southwest of Auslandia Springs. Julie is asked to meet with the indigenous groups next week and needs to prepare for the meeting with her new team.

2 – The Expansion of Auslandia Springs’s Airport: Along with the above initiative, Smith-Chong is tentatively planning to expand Auslandia Spring’s old, outdated airport to facilitate the anticipated increase in passengers coming to visit this world-class tourist and casino destination, expected to reach 3 million visitors per year.

3 – The Derwood Cruise Ship Port Expansion: Another part of Smith-Chong’s overall plan is to enhance cruise ship capacity from Plata’s ports to Derwood. Smith-Chong wishes to invest in expanding the port of Derwood to accommodate cruise ships coming from Plata. From the port, tourists will have access by train to the new Auslandia Springs resort.

Julie is now attempting to familiarize herself with the planned land transactions, and to understand the issues with permits and why some in the indigenous community are wavering in their commitment. In the interim, she heads home after her first day, setting up her new laptop and phone and calling a friend in Auslandia Springs, to advise that she may visit her next week due to work travel. Her friend works for the federal government as an IT specialist and is located at Spring Gap, a secret government facility adjacent to Auslandia Springs.

Within a few weeks, Julie becomes overwhelmed with the information she is discovering. It conflicts with the world she thought she understood. One day she also finds papers in the copying machine that someone accidentally left. They seem to be detailed technical reports on certain rare earth oxides of scandium, lanthanum, and cerium found in various parts of the country, including Auslandia Springs. Julie remembers reading that these minerals are essential in some weapons technologies such as guided missile systems, as well as in advanced computer systems. Julie knows that these minerals are in high demand in many countries around the world. Julie questions the information and wants to free her mind of the complex issues that seem to meet her at every turn. Is the venture actually more about mining than tourism? Is there something else going on? The realization that not everything is as it appears frightens her. There is another dimension to all these actions that only those privy to the information can comprehend.

Julie’s suspicions grow. She reads national and social media stories about increasing numbers of cyberattacks and comes to believe her own phone and computer may have been hacked since she started her new job. She plans to have them checked out by a skilled computer specialist. Perhaps someone she knows can enlighten her now that she is beginning to open her mind to the possibilities. Her father always said, “the mind is like a parachute, it only works when it is open.” With his voice echoing in her mind, she sets

herself the task of finding out what is happening in Auslandia in general and in her company in particular, and how her new position and tasks may relate to a broader agenda that she is only beginning to understand.

Julie has found herself caught between doing the job she is being paid for – and doing it well – and the values that motivated her to seek social change and fight against corruption. Rather than deciding between these alternatives, she continues to probe into the company's role in exploiting the environment for profit. She worries about the consequences of bringing these practices into the public domain as a whistleblower. She would no doubt lose her job, but there may be a bigger price to pay, including threats to her safety. Moving forward in time, what more will she discover?

## Possible questions for all audiences

- 1) What elements seem to indicate that we are in a hybrid warfare situation? The case mentions different tactics being used. Can you identify all of them? How do they play in conjunction with one another?
- 2) Draw a comprehensive stakeholder map of the case. Who are the relevant people and institutions that should be considered in this situation, and how do they relate to one another? List and prioritize the interests of each of the main stakeholders of the case.
- 3) The case mentions increasingly difficult living conditions and mentions “precarious” as the plight of future generations. How could this impact life choices, identity, and the negotiation strategies of members of these generations? In your opinion, is this future plausible – or not?
- 4) With two offers in hand, which way should Julie go? How do you analyze the dilemma Julie faces? If you were in her shoes, what elements would make you accept the offer from the international trading firm – or the alternative from the eco-friendly fuel company? It may be useful to list all of Julie’s interests and values to see how each option may contribute to fulfilling them.
- 5) What is whistleblowing and how does it work? Should Julie blow the whistle? If so, under which conditions? What do you know about your country’s laws re: whistleblowing: are they protective enough?
- 6) Many people in Julie’s situation, when torn between interests and values, choose to remain in place and drive positive change from the inside; in this scenario, would you consider this a viable strategy? If so, what negotiations, if any, should Julie engage in with her employer?

## Possible specific questions for lawyers and law students

- 1) As Julie's lawyer, how would you approach counseling her regarding which job to accept? What additional information might you want to gather to better advise Julie about her choice? Are there specific contractual terms that you might want to negotiate for Julie in each job?
- 2) Julie has approached you as a part of Smith-Chong's company legal team. What law (using your own country's legal code) do you need to research as part of the negotiation with the indigenous communities over the resort complex?
- 3) How would you recommend that Julie approach this negotiation/meeting regarding the resort complex? Specifically, should you be present (as the lawyer on this project)? Should you rent a space for the meeting, have them at your offices, or someplace else? How should Julie prepare for this negotiation?
- 4) Julie has come to you as her personal lawyer to discuss the information she has discovered and possibly becoming a whistleblower. What do you advise her? Do you want more information? If yes, what information?
- 5) As Julie's lawyer, if Julie decides to be a whistleblower, would you want to involve other people in her case? What kind of experts might you consult with? Would you have concerns about confidential communications with those experts? How would you protect the privacy/confidentiality of your conversations and other communications, both with Julie and any other potential experts that you might involve in the case?
- 6) What if Julie, with her deliberations on becoming a whistleblower, comes to you as the company's lawyer, not as her personal lawyer? Does this change the advice you would give her? What are the differences in your duties/responsibilities as Julie's lawyer or the company's lawyer?
- 7) Reflect on different countries' / your country's laws regarding whistleblower protection. Are they sufficient to guarantee the efficacy of whistleblowing and the safety and well-being of the whistleblower? What changes to the laws and regulations would you advise?



**“Some morning you may awake to find that the gentle and kind things around you have begun to have offensive and lethal characteristics.”**

From a series of weavings by Rachel Parish, with quotes from Qiao and Wang’s *Unrestricted Warfare* (People’s Liberation Army Publishing House, Beijing 1999.) In color at <https://rachelparish.com/projects/gentle-and-kind-things/>