



# Future Justice

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## World on Fire

Luke Nicol

**Still, years** from the event I cannot come to terms with what has happened. It seems like a bad dream, a living nightmare come to stalk my waking mind. When I close my eyes I can pretend that it was all just a bad dream, but reality crushes my perfect illusion, for eyes can not stay closed forever, and what they see condemns me for my lie.

We never saw it coming. That was the worst part. Not the fear, the pain, the death — but that it was sudden. Maybe if we saw it coming we would have been prepared, alert, and ready. Maybe ...



I had a normal life once. I had a wife and a child, a beautiful girl, with eyes so bright they could white out the sun. That's all gone now, drawn behind a grey curtain that has fallen across entire countries plunging those who live there into a darkness that they call oppression. I can still remember my time with her. I brought her a globe for her sixth birthday. It cost me near to two week's wages, but it was worth it to see her smile, and to spend the afternoons with her learning all the country's names.

'Daddy?' She would say, 'What's that one?'

'Canada, honey,' I would reply.

'What about that one?'

'America, darling.'



LUKE NICOL

How that world on that globe has changed.



I was 22 when they bought the farm down the road, 500 acres of prime land with over 300 employees. Foreign investors they said, looking to start a bio-diesel farm. How they were going to farm this diesel nobody knew, but the money they had paid had the whole region talking. '\$5000US!' They would say, 'Why would anyone pay \$5000US?'

That's how it began.

If only we knew then, what we know now.



It started so slowly. They didn't need the workers they said, not all of them. What had once been done by hand was now done with modern machinery. Tasks that had taken weeks took an afternoon, so fewer people were needed. The guns were to guard the machinery they said, the fences were to guard the crop. I used to wonder why they needed this crop and its diesel. People in the village said it was needed for heating in other countries around the world. 'Global warming', they said.



Slowly our land began to change.

The wet seasons grew shorter, the land hotter. My people's crops withered and died while the Westerner's crops flourished. More and more land was claimed by corporations cashing in on the desperate situation people found themselves in. I didn't think about the famers for a long time. Nobody paid them any heed, but as jobs became fewer and fewer people with hungry mouths began to protest.

Their cries of need were drowned out by the government who, with mouths fed on foreign money, ridiculed them as lazy. But the stream of protests became a torrent and a new government with new ideals was installed.

This was our downfall, our highest victory that led to our greatest defeat.



The fight for jobs became a push and shove between nations — then open war.

A taskforce to defend foreign citizens became a hostile occupation. Government ministers became outlaws, criminals and terrorists. Ordinary people became their collateral.

When the soldiers came to our village the war had been over for weeks, not that it had lasted long in the first place. But, in a way it continued, with attacks and counterattacks. This was when I first heard the term ‘guerrilla war’. I asked one of the foreign men in the village one day why our land was so precious. His reply was so simple but yet so complex — ‘It’s too hot in our country, we need more land that’s cooler, and more water to grow crops’. After hearing what he had to say I understood, for the first time, what this had all been about.



And on that day my world was shattered.

My daughters globe, a tattered, broken sphere of melted plastic and metal on the path before me seemed prophetic to as how my world was about to crumble. Even now I can close my eyes smell the burning grass and can almost taste the ash on my tongue. The sight that greeted me as I came over the rise struck me like a physical blow. Where once lay our house was now striped land, bare, broken earth made of dust and fire.

A carpet bombing they said, on good Intel.

And like that my family became a part of their collateral.

I never thought I would end my days behind wire in this camp. I sit back and remember our free country: free before the foreigners, the ‘global warming’ and the ‘global depression’. Even now, many people in the camp whisper about a coming revolution, a return to the old days and the glorious ‘King Mao’ of the East, but I do not believe them.

LUKE NICOL

I have learned not to trust revolutions. All that is left for me to do now is to look at the sunset, as I remember all I have lost, and watch another day die in the blood stained skies of the West.



**Luke Nicol** wrote this in 2009 when he was in Year 12 at Isis District State High School in Queensland.