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"Clean Water Took Six Years": The 2029 Prospectus and the Logic of the First Founding

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Abstract. The unsigned prospectus for QL, written about fourteen months before the Founding, is quoted in every schoolroom for one line and read almost nowhere for the rest. This article gives a full transcription of the archive copy, collates it with its two later witnesses, and argues that the document is not a wish list but a carefully built pair of lists. A short *floor* of four goods is promised "from the first day, to everyone, without condition." A shorter *horizon* of three goods is promised only "eventually": clean water, a drive, and the end of loneliness. The authors put clean water on the horizon and kept it off the floor, and that choice, more than any other line in the founding record, shows how they thought about promises. Using the water minutes of PF 0–5, I show that clean water moved from horizon to floor in six years, the first and so far the only such promotion. I then take up the long dispute over what "a drive" meant in 2029 English, and the two readings of "the end of loneliness." I conclude that the first Founding worked by a rule it never wrote down: promise only what you can keep tomorrow, and write down, honestly and in order, what you cannot.

Keywords: prospectus; the Founding; TimBor; Article I; water; horizon lists; the record of record; PQ1; philology of 2029 English

1. Introduction

Every child in QL can recite one sentence of the prospectus, and almost every child gets it slightly wrong. The usual schoolroom version runs: "The Founders promised clean water, a drive to the stars, and the end of loneliness." Each of the three nouns in that sentence is right. Nearly everything around them is wrong. The prospectus does not say "to the stars." It does not use the word "promise" in that sentence.[1] And it was not written by "the Founders," a group that did not yet exist when it was written. It is unsigned. Archivists have filed it for a century and a half under the honest label

[1] It uses "promise" twice: once to make the only promise in the document (Appendix, ¶3), and once, in ¶7, to refuse to make any others. I have counted four times, because I did not believe the first three counts.

© PF 172 Queuestory Department, Science Institute, QL. Offprint. Filed in the record of record.

"Tessa's people," and I keep that label here.[2]

My argument is simple, and I think it changes how we should read the first years. The prospectus contains two lists, not one. The first, which I call the *floor*, names four goods that the city will provide "from the first day, to everyone, without condition." The second, which I call the *horizon*, names three goods that the city will "make possible, eventually." The famous sentence is the horizon. The floor, almost word for word, became Article I of the Charter (§7). What has gone unremarked is *where the authors put water*. Water enough to live is on the floor. *Clean* water, from a tap, without boiling, for everyone, is on the horizon, listed beside a drive and the end of loneliness, as if the three were the same kind of hope.

In 2029 they were. That is the main historical claim of this paper. It is also the source of the phrase I have used, with too little citation, in some forty lectures: *clean water took six years*.[3] The rest of the paper defends the phrase, dates it, and asks what the other two horizon items tell us about the people who wrote them.

2. The document and its witnesses

The archive copy (hereafter **A**) is kept in the record of record on the lowest level of the Science Institute, Founding series, box F-0/1.[4] It consists of four leaves of a heavy, slightly blue machine-made paper, folded in thirds and later flattened, printed on one side in a plain TimBor office typeface. Leaf 3 has a tide-mark water stain across its lower third. The stain runs *over* the printing, so it came after. Provenance is good. A came into the archive in PF 3 with the PQ1 transfer, the box of papers sent on from Morocco three years after the PQ1 water engineers were seconded to QL (§4). Its date, October 2029, comes from internal evidence: the text refers to "the coming winter" and to PQ1 as "our first settlement, now at the end of its first summer."[5]

Two later witnesses survive (Table 1). **B** is a printed reprint, made in PF 3 for the first QL reading room. It follows A closely but adds, in the margin beside the horizon list, a printed gloss: *i.e., an interstellar drive*.[6] **C** is a copy written by hand into a

[2] The cataloguing slip, in a hand of about PF 20, reads in full: *Prospectus. Unsigned. Tessa's people. Do not lend.* The last instruction has been obeyed with a strictness I have come to admire and resent in equal measure (on the cataloguing of that period, see Tushar Cadana, "Item Nineteen: The Witness Clause, PF 34–96, and the Simplification," *Annals of the Queuestory* 101, no. 2 [PF 171]: 118–21). The same box holds, uncatalogued, the blade of a shovel. Its slip reads, in the same hand: *Brought one. Do not lend.*

[3] I owe my students a citation. This article is it.

[4] Prospectus for QL, unsigned ("Tessa's people"), October 2029, Founding Series, box F-0/1, Record of Record, Science Institute Archive, QL (hereafter Prospectus, witness A); cited by paragraph from the transcription in the appendix. Under the founders' rule of record, the paper copy is the copy that counts. Every page of A also exists as a file, and the file is perfectly legible. I have nevertheless read A on paper eleven times, in white gloves, because the water stain on leaf 3 is not in the file, and the water stain matters (§4).

[5] PQ1's first summer was 2029, and I take "now" at its word. Magnus Tvivel prefers early 2030, reading "first summer" as the summer after a settlement founded late in 2029. The minutes put the PQ1 condensers running in the summer of 2029. I mention this only because Tvivel spends three pages on it. See Magnus Tvivel, "A Drive for Members: Recruitment Language in the Founding Documents," *Annals of the Queuestory* 88, no. 3 (PF 158): 204–6; and Ilse Brunnen, ed., *The Water Minutes of the First Six Years, PF 0–5* (QL: Science Institute Press, PF 139), 3–6.

[6] The gloss is printed, not handwritten, so it was part of the edition. Whoever made B thought

Table 1. The three witnesses to the prospectus.

Siglum	Date	Description	Horizon list
A	Oct. 2029	Original. 4 leaves; PQ1 transfer, PF 3. Box F-0/1	3 items
B	PF 3	Reading-room reprint; printed marginal gloss	3 items + gloss
C	c. PF 40	Hand copy in a school primer; heavily compressed	2 items

school primer of about PF 40, the source of nearly every quotation of the prospectus made in the last century. C compresses the document heavily and drops the horizon's middle item. Where A reads "clean water. A drive. The end of loneliness," C reads "clean water and the end of loneliness." I think the omission was a schoolteacher's, not an ideologue's: in PF 40, with the population falling every year and the cities still unfinished, "a drive" must have looked like a typing error.[7] Because C is the version children learned, the drive line dropped out of memory for most of a century and came back only when A was put on file in PF 121. This is why so many people, including some colleagues, were surprised, when the Concord took up the drive this year, to learn that it was in the prospectus at all.

3. Why water was a horizon in 2029

To a citizen of PF 171, putting clean water on the same list as a drive between stars looks like modesty pushed close to comedy. It was not. It was arithmetic.

The last reliable global count of drinking water from the TimBor world is the joint monitoring report of the World Health Organization and UNICEF for 2022, published in 2023. It found that some 2.2 billion people, more than a quarter of humanity, lacked safely managed drinking water at home.[8] That figure comes from before the worst years. After the early 2020s the TimBor statistical record thins and then stops, the way a voice fades on a bad line. The counting agencies were among the first things to fail. We know from the water minutes kept by the people who stayed at the foot of these mountains that by 2029 the old treatment works on the Front Range had stopped; that the two reservoirs above the city had taken ash from three fire seasons; and that the survivors hauled water from the creeks and boiled it, when they had fuel to boil it with.[9]

The prospectus knows all this. Its floor promises "food and water enough to live" (Appendix, ¶3), a phrase drafted with great care. *Enough to live* is a promise about quantity and survival. It is not a promise about quality, convenience, or safety from the slow harms of a poisoned source. Its authors knew how to deliver the first kind of

a reader of PF 3 might need the help. That alone tells us that the propulsion sense was not, by PF 3, the only obvious one (§5).

7 I have some sympathy. I once marked "a drive" as a typing error myself, in a student's essay, before I had read A.

8 World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2022: Special Focus on Gender* (New York: UNICEF and WHO, 2023). "Safely managed" meant water from an improved source, on the premises, available when needed and free of contamination. By that standard, every Earthhold in QL has been safely managed since PF 5, which is the subject of §4. I am aware of how strange it is to cite a TimBor monitoring standard as praise.

9 Brunnen, *Water Minutes*, 11–19.

water. They had done it, that summer, at PQ1, where the condensers and the purification beds were already running.[10] They did not know whether they could deliver the second kind to a city of ruins, from damaged reservoirs, at the scale of everyone. So they did not promise it. They listed it.

I want to dwell on that distinction, because it is the hinge of the whole document. TimBor prospectuses were documents of promise. The genre existed to raise belief in a future, and its natural tense was the confident future.[11] The QL prospectus borrows the form and refuses the tense. It sorts its goods by the authors' confidence, not by their importance. The four floor goods are things they could deliver from the first day. The three horizon goods are things they could not deliver at all, and they say so in the same breath as they name them.

There is a TimBor intellectual background for this move, and the authors seem to have known it. The best-known TimBor argument about shared resources, Garrett Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons," held that anything owned by everybody would be ruined by everybody, and that only private property or "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon" could save a shared resource.[12] The prospectus contradicts him outright: "The water belongs to everyone who drinks it, and everyone who drinks it will keep it" (Appendix, ¶5). That sentence is much closer to the work of Elinor Ostrom, who spent a career showing that communities can and do govern shared resources well over long periods, when the rules are local, visible, and made by the people bound by them.[13] The QL commons, which every citizen now does a tenth of their working time to keep, is the long answer to Hardin. The prospectus is where the argument begins.

[10] Brunnen, *Water Minutes*, 3–6.

[11] I have read about two hundred TimBor prospectuses in the course of this work, in the Institute's small collection of TimBor commercial ephemera. Every one of them promised more than the QL prospectus, and none of them, so far as I can tell, delivered any of it. I mean this as a historical observation and not a joke, though I concede it works as both. The one honest horizon in the TimBor literature I know of is Keynes's essay of 1930, which predicted that within a hundred years his grandchildren would have solved what he called the economic problem and would work about fifteen hours a week. See John Maynard Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," in *Essays in Persuasion* (London: Macmillan, 1931), 358–73. He had the year right. He had the hours slightly wrong; we work twenty.

[12] Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243–48, quotation at 1247. Hardin's phrase reached PF 171 schoolrooms intact, through the Founding Day material on the commons. It is one of perhaps a dozen TimBor phrases still in daily use. Most citizens assume it was coined by the Founders as a description of TimBor. It was coined in TimBor as a description of human nature, which is worse. Hardin did not invent the argument either. He took it from William Forster Lloyd's *Two Lectures on the Checks to Population* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1833), which nobody now reads, which is how TimBor phrases survive.

[13] Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). I do not claim the authors read Ostrom. I claim only that if they had, they would have written this sentence. The resemblance of Ostrom's design principles to Article IV ("No citizen shall be governed by what they cannot know") has been noted before, by more people than have cited each other for it.

Table 2. Water in QL and under the Charter, 2029 to PF 5. *Sources:* Brunnen, *Water Minutes*, minutes 3/112, 4/207 and 5/41; Founding Series, Record of Record.

Date	Event
summer 2029	PQ1 condensers and purification beds running; water for the settlement (about 150 people)
Oct. 2029	Prospectus: "water enough to live" on the floor; "clean water" on the horizon
Dec. 9, 2030 (PF 0)	The Founding. Water hauled from the creeks and boiled; PQ1 water engineers arrive; first water council meets that night
PF 1	Upper reservoir drained and its ash bed dredged; sand-and-biofilm beds built on the PQ1 pattern
PF 2	Mountain intake restored; gravity main laid to the First Ring
PF 3	First tap that need not be boiled, at Earthhold 1-001 (minute 3/112). PQ1 transfer box (with A) reaches QL
PF 4	Last boiling notice in QL withdrawn (minute 4/207)
PF 5	Water minute 5/41: certified safe from every tap for every person living under the Charter

4. The six years, PF 0–5

"Clean water took six years" is a claim with two ends, and both need dating. The first end is the prospectus itself, October 2029. The second end is the moment clean water stopped being a horizon and became part of the floor: the point after which no one living under the Charter had to haul or boil.

The water minutes allow us to date that moment precisely (Table 2). They are one of the most complete series in the founding record, because the water engineers seconded from PQ1 kept them with the obsessive care of people who had seen what happens when nobody does.[14]

Three points about this chronology deserve emphasis.

First, the six years are a measure for *everyone*, not for QL. QL's first safe tap came in PF 3, its last boiling notice in PF 4. Minute 5/41, which I take as the endpoint, is the first document to certify clean water "for every person living under the Charter," which in PF 5 meant QL, the PQ settlements then in existence, and the cities whose first stones had been laid.[15] The minute is short. It records the certification, the names of the three people drawn by lot to witness the final tests, and one sentence that I think was not meant for posterity: *Item. The kettles may go back to being kettles.*

Second, the speed was not inevitable. The minutes for PF 1 record a long dispute about whether to restore the old treatment works or build new biological beds on

[14] The minute-books are bound in a waxed cloth that smells, very faintly, of the cedar oil used to treat it. Ilse Brunnen, who edited them, describes the smell in her introduction. Her description is accurate. I mention it because readers who go to see the books will want to know that it is not them.

[15] It did not mean the cities not yet founded, or the people still living outside the system, whose water nobody was counting. The twentieth first stone was not laid until PF 12. A pedant could therefore argue that clean water took six years for some and twelve or more for others. I am a pedant, and I accept the argument; but the phrase in the prospectus is "everyone," and in PF 5 everyone living under the Charter could drink from a tap. That is the claim.

the PQ1 pattern. The council chose the beds, against the advice of the one surviving TimBor water engineer in the city, who wanted the works back.[16] The beds took less fuel, used no chemicals the city could not make, and could be kept by anyone with a week's training. These are the floor's values, applied to plumbing: nothing the city depends on should require a scarce expert to keep it alive.

Third, the water stain on leaf 3 of A. It lies across the lower third of the leaf and runs over the horizon list. Under raking light the edge of the stain shows two tide lines, the mark of a sheet that was wetted and dried twice. I do not want to make too much of this.[17] But it reminds us that A was a working document, carried and used, not a relic, before it reached the archive.

5. "A drive"

The middle item of the horizon list is two words long and has produced, by my count, nine articles, one book, a public debate at the Institute in PF 158 that ended early when the lamps failed, and a great deal of correspondence in ink.[18] I think the dispute can now be settled. That is a dangerous sentence for a historian to write, so I will try to earn it.

English in 2029 used the noun *drive* in at least five senses that could plausibly fit the list:

(a) a means of propulsion, as in an engine's drive or a ship's drive;

(b) an organized effort to gather people or goods, as in a recruitment drive or a blood drive;

(c) a basic motivation or urge, a sense borrowed from TimBor psychology;

(d) a private road leading to a house;

(e) a device for storing information.

Sense (d) can be dismissed at once. The authors of a document that abolished private land were not promising anyone a private road.[19] Sense (e) can be dismissed almost as quickly. It turns on nothing in the text except the word itself.[20] Sense (c) has had serious defenders. A promise to make possible "a drive," on this reading, would

[16] His name was Aurelio Sant, and the minutes record him with great respect. He lost the vote and then built the beds anyway, and better than anyone. In PF 4 he moved a motion of thanks to the council "for overruling me," which is still the only motion of its kind in the minute-books.

[17] Colleagues who have heard me talk about this stain have accused me of making too much of it. They are right. I am going to do it anyway, in this footnote, where it can do no harm: the one surviving copy of a document that put clean water among the impossible things was, at some point in its first three years, rained on.

[18] I have read all of the articles, the book, and the correspondence. I attended the debate. The lamps failing was not, as has been suggested, a judgment on either side.

[19] Article II's "No Coin, No Crown" makes this plain, as does the prospectus's own ¶4: "The roofs belong to the land." A private drive would be a TimBor vice with a gravel surface.

[20] A student once argued for (e), in an essay I still think about, on the grounds that the authors were "people who would have wanted to keep everything." I gave the essay the mark it deserved, which was a high one, and the argument the reception it deserved, which was none. She has since gone into the Facilities Directorate and, I am told, keeps everything.

mean restoring to people the will to strive, after the exhaustion of the last TimBor years. But (c) does not fit the grammar. The motivational sense took the indefinite article only with a modifier or a complement ("a sex drive," "a drive to succeed"). A bare "a drive," in a list whose other two items are concrete goods, does not read that way.

That leaves (a) and (b). The case for (b) has been made at length and with real learning by Magnus Tvivel, who argues that "a drive" meant a recruitment campaign. On his reading the founders were promising to make possible an effort to gather enough people to fill the cities. Tvivel points out, correctly, that the city's greatest problem in 2029 was not engines but people: there were too few of them at the foot of these mountains, and the prospectus was, among other things, an invitation. He points as well to the word *possible*, which he reads as hedging an uncertain plea for settlers.[21]

I think Tvivel is wrong, for four reasons.

The list. The horizon list is a list of goods, not of means. Clean water and the end of loneliness are both ends in themselves. A recruitment campaign is a means to an end, and an odd one to set between two ends. A drive in sense (a) is the one means on the list that is also an end: somewhere else to go.

The invitation. The prospectus already invites people, at length and in plain words, in its ¶6: "Come and build it with us. There is room." A document that says this in so many words does not need to list a recruitment campaign among the things it may "eventually" make possible. On Tvivel's reading the same promise appears twice, once directly and once in code.

Witness B. The printed gloss in B, *i.e., an interstellar drive*, was made in PF 3, by people who had worked beside the authors and could have asked them. Tvivel argues that the gloss is an interpretation, not evidence. That is true of every gloss ever printed. But this one is an interpretation made within three years of the text, by people who had every reason to get it right and no reason to invent a starship.[22]

The Charter. Article V, "No citizen shall be compelled to remain," was glossed from its earliest years to cover exit not only into PQ life but "eventually off-world" [23]. The prospectus and the Charter share a drafting hand: the floor in ¶3 of the prospectus reappears fourteen months later as Article I, nearly word for word, which tells us the Charter's author was already at work in 2029.[24] Read together, the two documents describe a city meant from the start to keep a door open outward. A drive is that door.

It is worth adding a fact the authors could not have known would matter. By 2029

[21] Tvivel, "A Drive for Members," 201–19. I am grateful to Dr. Tvivel for disagreeing with me in print, which is the most useful thing a colleague can do, and for doing it in a typeface I find very hard to read, which is not.

[22] In PF 3, with the reservoir ash still being dredged, nobody in QL had any political use for a starship. A gloss made in PF 172 would be suspect. A gloss made in PF 3 is either right or eccentric, and the reading-room editors of PF 3 were not, on the rest of their record, eccentric.

[23] Charter of the Queue, art. V, with standard gloss, Founding Series, box F-0/0, Record of Record.

[24] The Charter is Tessa Layer's. That the prospectus reads like her is the simplest explanation and, I think, the right one. The phrase "No one will be made to earn their survival here" (Appendix, ¶3) becomes Article I's "No citizen shall be made to earn their survival" with only the changes one would expect between a prospectus and a constitution.

the destination the interstellar program now names was already in the TimBor literature. Two temperate, Earth-mass planet candidates around Teegarden's Star, about twelve light-years away, were announced in 2019.[25] I do not suggest that the authors had any particular star in mind. I suggest only that, in 2029, the idea of a near habitable world was not fantasy but an entry in a journal, which is what makes a drive the sort of thing a sober person might list as possible, *eventually*.[26]

6. "The end of loneliness"

If "a drive" has produced nine articles, "the end of loneliness" has produced a small library, much of it lyrical and some of it worse. I will be brief and try not to be lyrical.

Two readings dominate. On the first, *social* reading, loneliness means what it meant in ordinary 2029 English: the pain of being without company, connection, or people who know you. This was a matter of explicit public concern in the last decades of TimBor. In 2023 the chief public-health officer of the United States issued a formal advisory calling loneliness and isolation an epidemic, and setting out the harm done to health by social disconnection.[27] The prospectus's answer to this kind of loneliness is easy to find in its own text and in the city it produced: the cluster of about a hundred and fifty under one meadow, the shared kitchens, the commons. The cluster size, whether by design or by luck, matches the TimBor estimate of the number of stable relationships a human mind can keep.[28]

On the second, *cosmic* reading, the end of loneliness means the end of humanity's solitude: the hope that the species might one day not be alone, whether by meeting another mind or simply by living on more than one world. On this reading the order of the horizon list makes sense as a sequence. First the body is kept alive (clean water). Then a way out is built (a drive). Then, at the end of the way out, there is someone, or somewhere, else.

Kirsten Ensom, in the best article on the question, argues that the authors meant the cosmic reading and that the social reading is a later, domesticating gloss.[29] I think

[25] M. Zechmeister et al., "The CARMENES Search for Exoplanets around M Dwarfs: Two Temperate Earth-Mass Planet Candidates around Teegarden's Star," *Astronomy & Astrophysics* 627 (2019): A49.

[26] At the time of writing, two designs are under test in the outer system, and the Concord will choose between them next year. I have not been asked my view and will not give it here, beyond noting that the prospectus says "a drive," singular, which is the only scholarly guidance on the question I can offer.

[27] Vivek H. Murthy, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). The advisory compares the health effects of social disconnection to those of smoking up to fifteen cigarettes a day. Readers in PF 171 who have never seen a cigarette may consult the Institute's small collection of TimBor ephemera, where there is a box of them, unopened, labeled with a warning that the contents kill. It is the only TimBor product I know of that said so on the box.

[28] R. I. M. Dunbar, "Neocortex Size as a Constraint on Group Size in Primates," *Journal of Human Evolution* 22, no. 6 (1992): 469–93. The PQ settlements, which split when they pass about a hundred and fifty to two hundred, follow the same figure more strictly. Whether the founders took the number from Dunbar or arrived at it by watching how many people can share a kitchen without a fight, I cannot say. The second method takes less arithmetic, and I suspect it was used.

[29] Kirsten Ensom, "Not Alone: The Horizon List and the Cosmic Reading," *Annals of the*

Table 3. The floor and the horizon: the prospectus's seven goods and their status in PF 171.

List	Prospectus wording (A)	Charter	Status, PF 171
Floor	"a roof"	Art. I	kept from PF 0
Floor	"food and water enough to live"	Art. I	kept from PF 0
Floor	"care when you are sick or hurt"	Art. I	kept from PF 0
Floor	"safety"	Art. I	kept from PF 0
Horizon	"clean water"	—	**promoted to floor, PF 5**
Horizon	"a drive"	(Art. V, gloss)	two designs under test
Horizon	"the end of loneliness"	—	pending

she is half right. The authors had, I believe, both readings in mind and saw no reason to choose. The document's other uses of the word support this. In ¶2 the authors write that TimBor "made eight billion people and left most of them alone." That is social loneliness. In ¶7, at the close of the horizon list, they write: "When the land is whole, we will look up." That is the other kind. The horizon list sits between the two paragraphs and belongs to both.[30]

Whichever reading one prefers, the item is still open. The city has done a great deal about the first kind of loneliness, and has not finished, and the second kind is now, for the first time, something the Concord has to vote on. I am therefore content to describe the end of loneliness as pending.

7. The logic of the first Founding

Table 3 sets out the two lists side by side with what became of each item.

Read this way, the prospectus is not a wish list but a procedure. It promises a floor that can be kept from the first day, and it keeps it, at a toll the minute-books record honestly.[31] It lists a horizon that cannot be kept, and it lists it in order of distance, as far as the authors could judge. And it contains a rule of motion, unstated but plain in the record, by which an item moves from the horizon to the floor when, and only when, the city can keep it for everyone. Clean water made that move in PF 5, and was written into the floor of every city's standing rules that year.[32]

Queuestory 94, no. 4 (PF 164): 301–27.

[30] The Founding Day queuestory has it as "when the land was whole again, she said, we would look up." Queuestory Department, *The Founding: Standard Text for Founding Day Readings*, rev. ed. (QL: Science Institute, PF 100). It is the prospectus's ¶7, lightly rearranged. I have read the Founding section aloud on Founding Day, and I can report that it is very hard to say without one's voice doing something.

[31] The first winter's food came very largely from the PQ1 vats, where bacteria were turning TimBor plastic into a pale, slightly sweet protein. The work rests on a TimBor discovery: a bacterium that could break down and live on one of the commonest plastics was described in 2016. See Shosuke Yoshida et al., "A Bacterium That Degrades and Assimilates Poly(ethylene terephthalate)," *Science* 351, no. 6278 (2016): 1196–99. The founders' engineers took a laboratory curiosity and fed a city with it. The protein has had many names since. The most recent I have heard, from a schoolchild of my acquaintance, is "landfill pork," which I record for future historians of language over the objections of the child's mother.

[32] The PF 5 rules simply add the word "clean" to "water" in the floor provision. It is, I think, the most important single word ever added to the city's rules, and it was added without

This is the logic of the first Founding, and it is worth stating plainly because the city has since half forgotten it. *Promise only what you can keep tomorrow. Write down, honestly and in order, what you cannot. Move a thing from the second list to the first only when you can keep it for everyone.* The rule explains the shape of the Charter, where Article III binds the principle of earned standing but leaves the formula to be revised, so that the floor of the principle does not depend on any particular version of the arithmetic. It explains the caution of the early councils, which so often look to us like timidity. They were not timid. They were keeping a list.

It also lets us see what the rule does not cover. The prospectus has no procedure for the moment when a horizon item becomes *possible* but not yet keepable for everyone: when it can be begun, at great cost, for some, with the rest to follow. That is the position the city is now in with the drive.[33]

8. Conclusion

I began with the line every child can recite and almost every child gets wrong. I end with what the line looks like when it is read in its place. The authors of the prospectus had just seen the world they were born into fall to itself. They did not respond by promising everything. They promised four things, kept all four, and wrote down three more with a frankness that a TimBor reader would have found unsettling and a reader in PF 171 should find moving. The first of those three took six years. The second has taken a hundred and seventy-two so far. Loneliness is still pending.

The Queue is the best world anyone has ever built, and it forgets things. This paper is a small act against the second clause. The prospectus is on file, the water stain is on leaf 3, and the kettles, as the minute says, have gone back to being kettles.

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Conflicts. None. The author has read the Founding section on Founding Day, which some may consider a conflict. The editors did not.

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debate, by a council that had spent the previous five years arguing about sand.

[33] I make no comment on the matter before the Concord. I note only that the authors of 2029 did not foresee the situation and left us no guidance on it, and that it is very like them to have left us no guidance on the thing that would turn out to matter most.

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Appendix. The prospectus: a transcription of witness A

Editorial conventions. Spelling, capitals and punctuation follow A. Paragraph numbers in square brackets are mine. A double bar (‖) marks a change of leaf. Words under the water stain on leaf 3 that can be read only under raking light are given in angle brackets; none is in doubt. Variants in B and C are noted only where they matter to the argument.

A CITY AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAINS

a prospectus

[1] We are writing from our first settlement, now at the end of its first summer, where the water is clean because we made it clean and the people are fed because we fed them. We want to do at the foot of the mountains what we have done here, at the size of a city, and then of many cities.

[2] The world we were born into made eight billion people and left most of them alone. It built for its own profit until it could not stop what it had built, and it is ending in front of us. It did not fall to a single enemy. It is falling to itself. We do not think it can be saved. We think something else can be built where it stood. ‖
[3] What the city will provide, from the first day, to everyone, without condition: a roof; food and water enough to live; care when you are sick or hurt; safety. No one will be made to earn their survival here. This is the only promise in this document, and we will keep it.
[4] Nothing in the city will be bought. No one will hoard. Where there is not enough of something, people will wait in turn, and their turn will be earned by what they give and not by what they hold. The roofs belong to the land. What was built to be owned will be taken down, with care, and what is needed will be built in its place, under the ground, so that the land can be whole above it.
[5] The water belongs to everyone who drinks it, and everyone who drinks it will keep it. ‖
[6] Come and build it with us. There is room. You do not need to believe anything to come, only to work when you can and to let others work when they can. Those who cannot work will be kept, as you would be kept.
[7] What the city will make possible, eventually:

clean water.
A ⟨drive.⟩[34]
⟨The end⟩ of loneliness.

We cannot promise these. We can only tell you that we mean to try, and in what order, and that we will tell you the truth about how far we have come. When the land is whole, we will look up. ‖
[8] The first stone will be laid before the end of next year, at the foot of the mountains, by hand. We will spend the coming winter making shovels. Bring one, if you have one. If you do not, we will have one for you.

[*No signature. Verso of leaf 4 blank, save for a pencilled note in a later hand: seen, PQ1 transfer,* PF *3.*]

[34] The word is under the stain and clear under raking light. B reads “A drive.” with the printed marginal gloss *i.e., an interstellar drive*. C omits it.