

Assignment to the netherworld.

By Yves Desgouttes

Twenty minutes ago, I stepped out of the vertical landing aircraft at Alpine International Airport. I rented a hydrogen powered hovercraft and I am about to crest a hill called Red Top. On my left I can see sentries in their light armored vehicle guarding the Elon Musk training center for commercial astronauts. Proceeding north the majestic peaks of the Teton Range prompt me to catch my breath.

My grandparents were born here but they left in 2030. They died 30 years ago, in Argentina. My parents were born in Canada after my grandpa had been employed as a resort manager of a snow activities center in middle Yukon. Snow resorts had to move north due to the scarcity of snowfalls in the lower forty-eight.

The marvel of the landscape is in full display. I can see the flat riverbed of the Snake River. The structures of take-off towers for the shuttles going to the Moon and Mars make for a weird contrast with the pristine nature. They seem to be an anomaly, an eye sore.

Fifty years ago, the "Hole" had entered in its final stage to become a refuge for the ultra-rich of the United States and the world. It was divided in holdings which are self-sufficient on every aspect. There are eighty to one hundred of them. The number of those large estates had been decided after a council of owners. Their size ranges from seventy-five to one thousand acres. Each domain is wholly self-sufficient. They exist without relying on any services from the region. Each property is autonomous. Plumbers, electricians, cyber experts, cooks, cleaning staff, gardeners, maintenance crews, security platoons, fire units, medical facilities, aerial transportation personnel, mechanics, vehicles squad, entertainment artist and creators. Private tuition for youths is the norm, and the teachers live in the estates; there is no school campus as such due to the fact that the population of children is small.

Each estate has a landing pad for vertical take-off craft powered by hydrogen reactors; the energy needed is by law, a mix of wind, and solar. The roads are deserted and form a network linking the various properties. The sole communal structure is huge. Once a year a council of owners meet in the building, to deal with common issues. It usually lasts for a week.

There is no need for any law enforcement units since each entity is very private. It is not well documented, but the rate of suicides is high but is kept hushed.

The interfacing with the outdoors is done using small craft which can transport five people and can land and take off vertically.

I am finally reaching my destination; armed sentries showing their weapons are going to verify my identity and let me in.

I am going to lecture on the history of ancient European cultures. My specialty is Scandinavian mythology. I am not Thor, but I wished I had his legendary hammer "Mjölnir" to destroy this depressing, narcissistic society in the "Hole" created by the need of rich individuals, who are self-appointed elites, to shelter themselves from the realities of what the Romans called the Plebeian masses.

I will be here, no more than three days; I can survive thinking about the handsome fee they are willing to pay in cryptocurrency.