

Citizen 1:

The overall feel to the new world is much bleaker than it was before. It feels as if the new world doesn't want us here. Every day the water grows closer and the inevitable becomes even more real. This approaching water isn't even my biggest fear. Every day the water gets higher and the ice gets thinner, but the scariest part of it is what happens once the water covers all the land. The constant accumulation of water in the upper atmosphere is said to cause massive storms along with the cooling of everything on the planet.

Technology is seen as an evil entity these days, which has brought the human race to this impasse. Furthermore, our idea of nature has reverted back to the belief that it is a dark mystery place that dares us to step forward into it. The first contact I had with nature reclaiming its land was in 2020 when I took my pregnant wife and child to the beach house in Stone Harbor New Jersey. This house had been passed down my family for generations. Stone Harbor is only 6ft above sea level so it was one of the first communities to absorb the full effect of this catastrophe. When we arrived at what was once a paradise away from the real world, we discovered that it had turned into a kiddie pool of trash as far as the eye can see. Even right up to the steps of the house! Walking downtown was like walking through a cemetery; cold and desolate with an unsettling feeling of fear that your and your family's home could be next.

I remember that the initial reaction to the rising sea levels was outbursts of anger from citizens who claim to have been aware of the problem all along and blamed it on the individual factories and livestock farms. What they didn't understand was that it was no individuals fault but a collective mistake that we would all have to pay for. Eventually the anger fell through and innovation took over; coming up with ways to live around this new obstacle. The first idea that was put into play was the creation of residencies on top of each other building up rather than out. At first, this was the main solution to the problem, but it would eventually become problematic itself due to the increased amount of tropical storms that were happening from the raised sea levels.

Adjusting to this major change was hard at first but it soon became customary. Then, while I was working in a Florida engineering firm our residence was hit hard by Hurricane Drumpf. Homes were lost and families were torn apart but we managed to get through it. The hardest part of this crisis has to watching my children reminisce about a world that was once much more open and vast. It causes my heart to break and my mind to search everywhere for a solution. Luckily, my wife views the situation in a much different light; making the best out of everything she can. She would take the children out to play in the water with life vests to enjoy the outside. I guess making the best out of a bad situation is a good quality, but it tugs on my heart not being able to give them a normal life like I had.

Houses are built much higher these days and on top of each other to help conserve space. This makes it very difficult to have a family vehicle so many of us have begun to rely heavily on public transportation. Unfortunately, when it would rain, all public transportation would stop, along with most of the world wondering if this was the storm that would engulf their home. The school curriculum became a stack of books mailed to you at the start of the year for you to teach your kids. This was due to the need for a space to shelter those who have lost their homes to storms and rising waters. The entire curriculum is about how to conserve the resources we have left, and to try to extend our lives on this planet.

A lot of money and news has been spent on funding NASA's programs to help locate a new home, since this one is obviously dying. The water that we see at the beaches isn't the water

I remember having seen before. Instead, it's polluted with human waste and artifice which has turned the water surrounding our towns to an almost sludge like texture, never letting us forget what we have done.

Some people have pledged their life to the water and have started to live out on the water. These aquatic societies are often looked down upon because they don't share the same moving forward mentality as most. I don't understand the stigma towards them. They are just trying to find a new way to cope with the new world. Many of these people are those who have turned their backs on modern civilization and technology in favor of using the ocean as a place to live.

The irony of how the human species will die is just too much. We, as a collective, took no care in our actions and, instead, used whatever we wanted to make whatever we could. This "progress" caused the earth to heat up to a point that shifted the natural balance and initiated a massive meltdown of the polar ice caps. Now that the planet has shown that it is incapable of supporting our glutinous consumption of natural resources, we are sitting above waiting to freeze to death.

Citizen 2:

I graduated Lafayette College in 2017 with a bright-eyed innocence the Earth hasn't seen since Hurricane Drumpf hit land just one year after. I was back home in Georgia when I saw the news that half of Florida was underwater, and I knew the world I inherited was not going to be kind to us. I made the most of it, finding jobs here and there when I could. It seemed like the world was falling apart around me, one giant ice sheet at a time.

I worked my way over to Hawthorne, California and found a job with SpaceX designing a Variable Specific Impulse Magnetoplasma Rocket with the intent of reducing travel time to Mars. When Elon Musk was the first man to step foot on Mars in 2019, I knew I had a chance to get off this dying planet. I rose the corporate ladder, finding my place on the team that led the world in interplanetary space travel. There was a new feeling in the air all around me. Manifest Destiny was alive and well again, giving humanity a new hope. To quote the famous actor/astronaut/colonization advocate Matthew McConaughey, "Mankind was born on Earth, it was never meant to die here." This was the mentality of SpaceX, and much of the country as Mars colonization became a hot political topic. Thankfully, space flight had been privatized and thus the government had no means of stopping us from leaving. After many years watching the Earth die around me, I was scheduled to be on a construction team of the first Mars colony, Ares.

We took off in *Hermes III* (a capacity of 435 souls aboard) on July 13, 2026, the same day the devastating typhoon struck China. Because my crew and I were among the first people to make the trip, mission control was still working out some of the bugs. I spent much of the past few years in training under the famous Matt Daemon: an astronaut known for being accidentally left on Mars during a NASA mission in the beginning of the decade, and a symbol for American pioneering. He told me if I am ever in trouble, just solve the problem at hand. Then solve the next one. If I do that enough times, eventually I will be okay. I needed this advice because life on Mars was hard.

I landed on Mars after a 5 month journey and was tasked with organizing the construction of Ares. The 673 people on the planet and I built pressurized residence halls, schools, food stocks, water machines, and most importantly, farms. We received regular transmissions from home of the turmoil that Earth was in. I felt a sense of guilt having left the whole world to die, but I was leading the charge that would save our species from extinction. I inherited a dying

world, but why is it my responsibility to save it? I have the means of leaving it and starting something fresh and exciting, so the problem on Earth is not my problem anymore. At least that is what my co-workers and I believe.

By 2028, we had finished initial construction of Ares and begun receiving new personnel every week. Over 23,000 permanent inhabitants will be living in Ares when Arc I is expected to arrive in 2030, carrying 100,000 passengers ready for a new life on the new planet.