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by stanley lieber

The business was failing. His standards were too high. Profits turned to steam and evaporated under the intense pressure of map revisions, course corrections, arbitrary edits, and total do-overs. To be fair, the staff were not equal to the task. Blood from a turnip, and so forth.

So, another failure. He couldn't take much more of this. He had felt that the blunt Earth could not appreciate his thundering footsteps. Maybe he was just clumsy. What was there to measure himself against?

New York. But he wouldn't go back there and look at that sky.

"Chief, what's next?" an underling asked. The Chief stared straight ahead.

Born of the pink triangle, rolling to his feet with the plan still fresh in his mind, he'd lost the plot somewhere along the way. Coming to Earth had been a mistake. Coming to New York had been a mistake. Coming to 1986 had been the worst mistake of all. His efforts to prevent the inevitable had perhaps only hastened its arrival.

And now New San Francisco. The whole arrangement had been displaced, transplanted a full century forward into a future it would never have otherwise known. Megatokyo was not his Japan, and New San Francisco resembled the Bay Area of his youth only in its bare geographic outline. Everything else had shifted unpredictably. It never even got foggy here.

He didn't know what to do. He was certainly not going to call and ask T for help.

He'd have to consider taking on venture capital. This was an avenue he had studiously avoided, and for good reason. He wanted to keep control of the ship. Investors meant a board, and a board meant even more perceptions to manage. This, too, would be bad for propulsion. It was no way to get from Point A to Point B.

He'd just have to find another approach.