

MAX PARADOX

EVERYTHING IS NORMAL HERE

A FOREIGN GUIDE TO THE EVERYDAY
ABSURDITIES OF LIFE IN AMERICA



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INTRO

America is a place where everything works—until it doesn't.
Which is often.
And loudly.
With paperwork.

From the outside, it looks efficient. Streamlined. Logical.
From the inside, it feels like living inside a pop-up notification
that never closes.

You arrive expecting chaos to be accidental.
You quickly realize it is structural.

Daily life in the United States is not absurd because people
are strange.
People are normal. Tired. Mostly polite. Slightly confused.
The absurdity comes from systems that insist on being taken
seriously while behaving like they were designed during a
coffee break that went on too long.

In other countries, daily life contains inconveniences.
In America, inconvenience is monetized, branded, and
upsold as a premium experience.

You don't just wait in line.
You wait in a line that has a policy.
The policy has a QR code.
The QR code leads to a form.
The form asks you to call a number.
The number plays music from 2006.

And everyone acts like this is normal.

This book is not about America being "worse."
It is about America being louder in its normality.
More confident.
More committed to doing simple things in the most complicated way possible.

Other countries also have rules.
But they often exist to make life tolerable.

Here, rules exist to protect the rule.

- In some countries, you show your ID once.
- In America, you show it repeatedly to prove you are still you.
- The system remains unconvinced.

You will notice patterns.

Healthcare that feels like a subscription service you forgot to cancel.

Customer service that apologizes sincerely while doing absolutely nothing.

Technology that promises convenience and delivers new forms of anxiety.

Freedom framed as choice, but only between identical options.

People elsewhere complain about bureaucracy.
Americans schedule it.

They block time for it.
They mentally prepare.
They bring snacks.

There is an impressive optimism embedded in all of this.
A belief that if you follow the steps correctly, the system will reward you.

It won't.
But it appreciates your effort.

What makes the absurdities sharper is comparison.

In one country, you miss a train and wait for the next one.
In another, you miss a train and fill out a form explaining why you missed the train.

In America, you miss a train and are offered a refund minus fees, taxes, emotional damage, and a sense of dignity.

- Somewhere else, silence is neutral.
- Here, silence means something went wrong.
- You just don't know what yet.

This is not a guide.
It will not help you navigate America better.
It will not make systems easier or faster.

It will simply sit with you in the discomfort and say:
"Yes. That thing you noticed. That was weird."

The goal is not outrage.
Outrage requires energy.

This book operates on recognition.

That moment when you laugh quietly because someone else finally said it.

That uncomfortable nod when you realize you've defended

the indefensible just to get through the day.
That relief of knowing the confusion wasn't personal.

- You didn't misunderstand.
- You adapted.
- That was the problem.

America functions.
It just does so theatrically.

And once you see it, you can't unsee it.

Chapter 1 – Everything Is Fine, Please Hold

In other countries, when something goes wrong, it feels accidental.

A mistake.

An exception.

In America, when something goes wrong, it feels scheduled.

You don't ask *if* it will fail.

You ask *when* and *how politely*.

The first lesson you learn is patience.

Not calm patience.

Administrative patience.

The kind that requires snacks.

You call a number because the website told you to.

The website exists because the office no longer does.

The office closed because "most people prefer online."

No one you know prefers online.

The call connects instantly.

This surprises you.

You are immediately punished for your optimism.

The voice thanks you for calling.

It assures you your call is important.

It then places you on hold.

Forever-adjacent.

- The music is loud enough to prevent thought.
- The volume resets every time the message repeats.
- The message repeats often.

In some countries, waiting is passive.
You stand.
You sit.
You wait.

In America, waiting is interactive.

You must confirm you are still waiting.
You must press buttons.
You must listen carefully "as our menu options have changed."

They have not.

The menu options have *never* changed.
But hope has.

When a human finally appears, they are kind.
Disarmingly kind.
They apologize preemptively.

They do not solve anything.

They explain the process.

America loves processes.

Processes are where responsibility goes to rest.

The person you're speaking to is not empowered to help.
They are empowered to explain why help is impossible.

- They understand your frustration.
- They validate your concern.
- They offer no outcome.

In other countries, bureaucracy feels cold.
Here, it feels friendly.

That makes it worse.

You are thanked repeatedly while being denied.
You are congratulated for your patience while losing time.
You are told you are valued while being transferred.

Transfers are a form of cardio.

You begin to recognize the pattern.

No one says "no."
They say "unfortunately."

No one makes decisions.
They reference policies.

Policies are treated like natural disasters.
Unavoidable.
Nobody's fault.

You ask for a supervisor.

This is not aggressive.
It is ceremonial.

The supervisor arrives with the same information, delivered
more slowly and with confidence.

- They restate the policy.
- They apologize again.
- They thank you for understanding, regardless of whether you do.

In some countries, escalation means resolution.
In America, escalation means repetition.

You tell the story again.
You become better at telling it.
You remove emotion because it slows things down.

This is personal growth.

The system rewards emotional neutrality.
It punishes urgency.

If you sound calm, you might be taken seriously.
If you sound distressed, you are routed to a different department.

That department is closed.

Everything is closed.

Except the hold music.

America excels at being available without being accessible.

Stores are open late.
Support is 24/7.
Help is theoretical.

You can always reach *someone*.
That someone can always redirect you.