Rodriquez's Auto-transcript of Jacob Skansky's description of his time at the Toji Corp Ballotmen Housing Facility in South Deering from interrogating him in the van on the way from the facility to Enrique's TexMex restaurant.

> You just don't go out after dark; it's as simple as that. Once it gets past 9pm, you lock the door to your room, and you don't leave until the sun comes up. Oh, the corp will tell ya that these places are the securest facilities on Earth. It's all part of the package that they hit you with to signup. Perhaps they are secure – from people on the outside. But it's the human refuse on the inside that's the problem… and maybe something else.
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> I'd been there for twenty years, and I'd probably have been there until I died if you hadn't come along to take me out of there. I've been out of the workforce too long now. No one will take me on. Back in the day I had a good job. It wasn't perfect, but at least my family had place to live and there was decent food on the table. Times were tough, but we had more than most people.
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> Lost my job after a few years of the Greater Depression, like so many others. Typical downsizing, you've heard how it goes. I couldn't get a new job, and the bills kept coming. My wife wasn't going to sit by as we sold off everything we had. She took most of our stuff and the kids and took off to LA to live with her parents again. The divorce papers from her lawyer arrived amonth later. The bank repossessed the house not long after that. The damn house hasn't had residents since then; it's in Brookfield which is pretty much toally abandoned now.
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> I lived on the streets for a while, but it was more than I could take. Gangs cut me up pretty bad and took the last few things I had in the world. I got sick and nearly died in a dumpster. I contemplated suicide, but I guess I didn't have the guts. I came as close to climbing over the railing on a bridge, but I just couldn't take that last step.
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> So I decided to sign my vote away. The recruiting girl came around to the homeless shelter I was at; anything beat the hell out of the situation I was in. I hadn't liked the idea before. People need their vote, so they can tell the government what they think. But when you have nothing in the world and your voice really doesn't count, then the offer of a roof over your head, a warm bed and three meals a day sounds like a much better deal that the crap you have…
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> They promise you the world, these bastards. The brochures make it look all new and shiny and clean. I'm surprised they're allowed to get away with lies like that. Perhaps the buildings did look like that, once upon a time. Ours sure as hell doesn't look like that now.
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> So, I signed my vote over to the Nayoda Group; they get to vote on my behalf in the federal and state elections. Not that it helped them any. They lost the last election, in this district anyway.
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> There is a mountain of legal paperwork to fill in when you sign your vote away. Some people have called it "signing their life away". You're basically selling your life to the corp. They'll take care of you, but you have to play by their rules from then on. The contract isn't easy to understand either. I tried to read all of it, but by the fifth page, my head was aching. So I just skimmed the rest and signed on the dotted line on page 37.
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> The Nayoda Group loaded me and a whole pile of other new signees onto a bus and drove us to our new home. You saw the place. The picture in the brochure looked only vaguely like the real thing.
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> The room is nothing flash. There's some threadbare carpet on the floor, but it's so old I'm not even sure what color it was when it was put in. The company furnishes each unit the same. There's a crappy old TV built into the wall and a couple of lounge chairs. Along one wall, there's a small bookshelf unit, also built-in. The paint's faded and peeling and there are a few spots where we've got rising damp. We've called the building management people, but they haven't done anything about it yet.

There's a small sink in one corner. You could drink the water but it tastes like crap. Too much chlorine. Fred and I keep a bucket under ours that we use as a toilet during the night. It’s safer than going down the hall. We each have a single bed and a small built in wardrobe. There’s not much room for anything else.

I feel like I'm abandoning Fred, my room-mate. He was in pretty much the same boat as me, so we got on OK. It was probably the best thing we could have done. Over the past three years, we’ve managed to keep each other relatively sane and stopped each other from doing some really dumb things. Hope he'll be OK.

Each quad has a communal bathroom at the end of the hall. Ours is better than most, I think. We’ve at least got one stall with a door, even if it doesn’t lock. At mealtime the other day, I met a new guy who has been assigned a room in 3rd quadrant. He told me that most stalls up there don’t even have a toilet anymore. They’ve all been smashed. You gotta use the hole in the floor and pour abucket of water down after it. If you can find the bucket, that is.

Everyone in the building goes to the mess for meals. They stagger meal times based on which quad you live in. If you miss the meal at your allotted time, you go hungry. Everyone has a bar codes titched to the breast pocket of the clothes the company gives you. When you go for meals, you have to pass through a gate and get scanned. I’ve never missed a meal yet. I might be dumb, but I’m not stupid.

The food they serve up is awful. There’s nothing fresh at all. It’s all processed… something. When I first came here, I used to wonder what the hell I was eating. These days I’m just grateful that it’s edible, using the term loosely.

The food is served up by volunteers. They’re the bastards who suck up to the company and try to get some extra favors. They have bigger rooms in the more secure inner quadrants of the building, with their own bathrooms. I’ve thought about volunteering a lot of times, but it’s not worth it. The rest of us give them shit about sucking up to the company and that their lives are just as miserable as the rest of us.

Apart from meal times, there’s no socializing with large groups of people. Sure, small groups get together and provide a little support for one another, but there’s not a whole lot of that. People here just don’t have anything to talk about. It’s just too depressing.

Some of the groups have formed to protect against the gangs that roam the corridors. That’s what I meant when I said you don’t go out after dark. It’s mostly teenagers that cause all the problems. They have nothing better to do with their time, so they terrorize people. The corporation pretends the problem doesn’t exist.

They have security goons that come round from time to time, but that usually only happens after someone has been killed or injured. “Protecting their assets” they call it. They need to keep us alive so that they can keep our votes. When somebody is killed, they come and take the murderer away pretty damn quickly. The rumors I’ve heard suggest that the punishment for killing a ballotman make life imprisonment in Joliette look like a Sunday picnic. The gangs seem to know how far they can go so the goons don’t interfere with their operations. Extortion, bashing, rapes and such “fun” things are pretty common.

Some of the gangs run drug smuggling and gambling rackets as well. For a lot of people who live here, life is just too hard without some sort of chemically induced release. The corp pays us all an allowance of corp scrip that we can use to purchase things like special TV events, alcohol or tobacco. Some people prefer to spend it on harder stuff. Lots of addicts.

> I guess it’s hardest for the kids. The corporation does run something resembling school, but it’s pretty inadequate and won’t help them get a job. Some ofthe kids who have been born in this complex can’t even read or write. I guess Toji figures that the kids will just grow up and sign their votes away like their parents. Not many make it out.
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> Victimizing someone else probably makes them feel stronger and more worthwhile. Fred and I have been lucky. We don’t tend to make ourselves too noticeable and we give enough of our scrip away to keep the quad gang happy, so they don’t bother us.
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> It’s funny, but a lot of people find religion in the quadrants. There’s nothing much else to do besides watching the TV, and even that can get too much sometimes. Not all of the religion is Christian either. Just about any sort of religious belief you can think of has followers somewhere in the complex and thereare probably those you’ve never heard of as well. I read a report in a paper that there was some weird cult in a complex on the East Coast last year. They were supposed to have sacrificed babies or something. Apparently, their corporation busted them and they found life after that to be decidedly more unpleasant.
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> In some ways, I’m actually glad that people have found religion around here. It helps them keep their hope alive, even if it is only dimly. Some of the better groups actually go out of their way to help others. Extra food and blankets, or medical help,that sort of thing. You’d think that the despair around them would crush their spirits, but not all of them.
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> As hard as it may sound, there are worse places that this one to live, right? I’ve lived on the street and it’s a lot worse than this. Well… until IT came.

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