



CHAPTER 1 PREVIEW

DISTINCT OR EXTINCT

**Future-Proofing People and Organizations
in the Age of AI**

By Mike Evans

Release April 2026

Chapter 1: The Ghost Port

"The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed."

— William Gibson

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – October 1956

Mikey Calabrese's alarm clock didn't get the chance to ring. It never did. Twenty years of loading cargo ships had wired his body to wake at 4:15 AM, fifteen minutes before the damn bell could shatter the quiet of his row house in South Philly.

He dressed in the dark. Flannel shirt, dungarees, steel-toed boots that had molded to his feet like a second skin. Downstairs, the coffee was already percolating. Despina, his wife of twelve years, knew the routine as well as he did. She'd be asleep again before he hit the sidewalk.

The October air bit at his face as he walked the six blocks to Sal's Diner. Inside, the place hummed with the pre-dawn energy of men who worked with their bodies. Longshoremen, mostly. Some truck drivers. The occasional cop finishing a night shift.

"Mikey! Over here!" Big Eddie Kowalski waved from the corner booth, his massive frame taking up half the seat. Next to him sat Jimmy "The Weasel" DeMarco, so named because he could squeeze into cargo holds nobody else could reach.

Mikey slid in across from them. The waitress, Doris—been there twenty years—poured his coffee without asking.

"You see the board yet?" Eddie asked, his voice gravelly from too many Lucky Strikes.

"Not yet. What're we looking at?"

"Four ships. Dutch freighter in Pier 12, two Liberty ships on 34 and 35, and a big container ship at 40. Word is the container's got machinery from Germany. Heavy lifts all day."

Mikey grinned. Heavy lifts meant overtime. Overtime meant he could get Despina that new washing machine she'd been eyeing at Gimbels. Maybe even take young Mikey Jr. to see the Phillies next spring.

By 6:00 AM, Pier 40 was organized chaos.

The SS Mercator sat low in the water, a 441-foot Dutch freighter loaded with 5,000 tons of automotive parts, industrial machinery, and precision equipment from Hamburg. Twenty-eight cargo holds. Roughly 180,000 cubic feet of freight that needed to move from ship to warehouse before the vessel could turn around and head back across the Atlantic.

Mikey's gang—twenty men strong—gathered around the hatch of Hold Number 3. Foreman Donovan, clipboard in hand and whistle around his neck, barked assignments.

"Calabrese, you're on the hook. Eddie, you and Martinez are in the hold. Weasel, you're running topside coordination. I want clean lifts, no damaged goods, no crushed fingers. The German stuff in this hold runs about two grand per crate. You drop it, you bought it."

The rhythm was hypnotic. By 10:00 AM, they'd moved forty-three crates. By noon, eighty-seven. Mikey's shoulders burned. His hands, even through leather gloves, were raw from the cargo hooks.

They broke for lunch. Sandwiches from home, thermoses of coffee, cigarettes. The men sat on the pier's edge, legs dangling over the water, watching the tugboats nudge a tanker into position three piers down.

"You know what I heard?" The Weasel said, unwrapping a meatball sandwich. "They're talking about making these containers standardized. Same size, so you can stack 'em like blocks."

Eddie snorted. "Yeah? And I heard they're gonna put a man on the moon. Load of horseshit."

"I'm serious. They're testing it in Newark. Big metal boxes, all the same dimensions. Crane picks up the whole box, drops it on a truck, truck drives away. No more rigging every piece."

Mikey laughed. "And what happens to us?"

The Weasel shrugged. "They still need someone to load the boxes, don't they?"

"The docks'll always need strong backs and good men," Mikey said, taking a bite of his sandwich. "This is steady work. My old man did it. I'm doing it. Mikey Jr. will probably do it too."

What Mikey Calabrese didn't know that October afternoon in 1956 was that he was staring directly at the force that would make his job, and jobs like his, completely obsolete within a generation.

Containerization wasn't coming. It had already arrived. He just couldn't see it yet.

Shanghai, China – March 2024

Chen Wei stood in the climate-controlled operations center of Yangshan Deep Water Port, watching 214 automated guided vehicles move 23,756 containers with the precision of a choreographed dance...

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This is just the opening of Chapter 1 from *Distinct or Extinct: Future-Proofing People and Organizations in the Age of AI*. Connect and we'll send the full chapter.

The book explores:

- The 7-Sided Pincer Movement—all seven disruptive forces attacking jobs simultaneously
- The 5-Ingredient Kryptonite Defense—your practical framework to not just survive but dominate
- Battle-tested strategies from 27 years working with 34 Fortune 50 companies



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