

Introduction to Allen Steele and *Coyote*

If climate change is real and if humans are causing it, we are in for some tough times in the future-even in the near future. As Earth heats up, the polar ice caps will melt and oceans will rise-a lot, flooding many cities and major parts of low lying countries. Extreme weather ranging from flooding to drought will affect many of the continents still above water. Agriculture will shift away from equatorial and temperate regions toward the poles, with major geographic and political implications. Every aspect of human life will change. Even without global warming, wars over water are predicted to be more important and more prevalent than wars over oil. Earth's population increase will make feeding the multitudes, even without global warming, into an increasingly, tragically unsuccessful enterprise.

As fossil fuels are used up, increases in Earth's temperature, due to global warming, will slow, but unless fusion has come on-line as a cheap source of energy, the world's supply of energy will drastically decrease. Dwindling supplies of fossil fuels will be the subject of planet-wide wars. Heroic, destructive methods will be used to obtain the remaining fossil fuels will be increasingly common. Energy prices will favor only the very rich. Allen Steele imagines this sort of scenario in which the ability of the Earth to sustain substantial human life is gradually irrelevant. Political unrest follows and a totalitarian regime with its strongest support in the South, takes over the United States. Ultimately, even those in charge realize that Earth can no longer successfully sustain the human population: other Earth-like planets must be found and colonized. Fortunately, available technology makes this goal at least remotely possible and a star ship is prepared for a journey to a hopefully hospitable destination 46 light years from Earth.

The star ship is named Alabama, and a group of rebels is making deadly plans to hijack it as it begins a journey to the destination moon named Coyote.