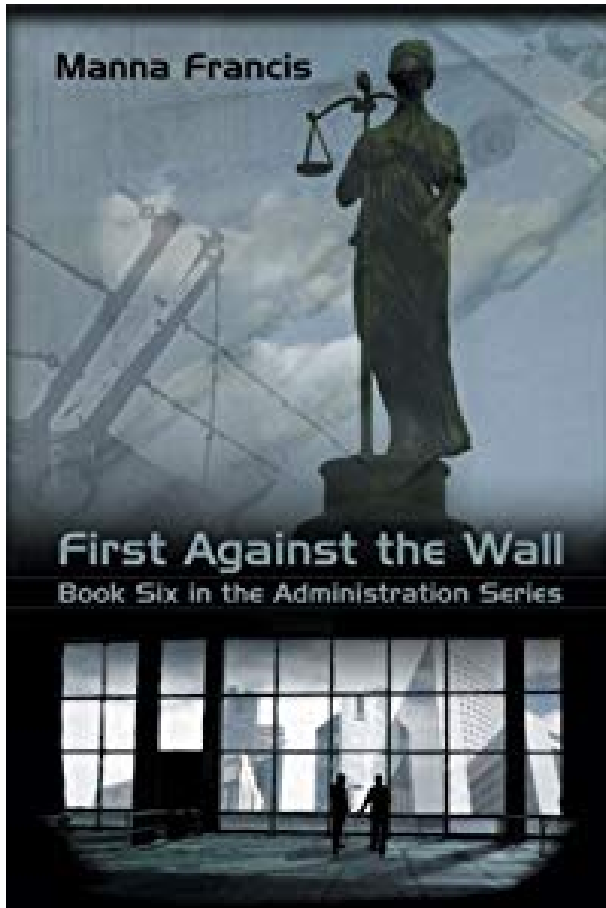


First Against the Wall



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Who is leading the rabble to victory? Toreth shifted against the wall, trying to get comfortable. Between bruises and handcuffs, he didn't have much success. On the first day, in the first cell, the lights had been on, the water dispenser working, and the prisoner feeding schedule still running. Then the lights went out, and things had gone steadily downhill from there. Now, he sat in darkness so absolute that he couldn't see a hand in front of his face, if he'd been in a position to check. The last time he'd been taken out of the cell it had been light in the corridors, which was something. If the power to the building failed totally, they would suffocate down here. At the moment, the air cycling was still functional, feeding chill air into the cell--like the lights, the heating systems had been switched off or had broken down. He couldn't accurately estimate when he'd last eaten.

Two days or so, probably, but he was starting to feel the effects. The water system worried him most.

It worked only intermittently and the water had an unpleasant, overly chemical flavor. The systems were failing. Something had gone badly wrong, and had continued to go wrong for so long that he'd been forced unwillingly to conclude that it had to have hit more than I&I. Revolution has come to the Administration, as the citizens rise up against government and corporate oppression. With old and new enemies all around them,

what will the new future hold for despised para-investigator Val Toreth, and corporate highflier Keir Warrick?
And how long will that future last?