

# Waves

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*Like the knots of a large net, the megacities sprawled across the darkened landscape of the night land. Tied to together with tethers of roads and wires, the artificial expanse was bathed in an invisible static field, a standing wave of interference which answered only to its own tempo.*

*Great antennae had been constructed from the electrical grid, the water system, and the hard carbon in the pavement. It consumed the meters, the switches, the valves, and the lights. It bound them all from the appliances, to the moving picture screens, and the tools of communication.*

*Far above the blinding glow of the megacities, aircraft and rockets released untold tons of nanodust. Some were synthetic imitations of life, others were circuits, and still others were the noctilucent filaments. They were*

released every day, and every night, through great grey clouds, and thick globular trails that persisted in the sky. This blatant effort went unnoticed by the denizens of the megacities, who rarely noticed anything they were not told to put their attention toward.

The people had long since grown accustomed to the static field, the noise. It had now become a welcome protection from the terrifying onrush of reality. Reality and its twin, truth, no longer meant anything to the bulk of the populace. Yet a few of the denizens had become aware of the static. They heard it during those rare moments when the electricity failed, as a fading echoe. It was they also, who were aware of the Others. At times they even saw them, but they rarely mentioned it, because the denizens would brand them idiots, shun them, or visit violence upon them.

Still, even the denizens were aware of the great decline. They tried to blacken it out, yet their anxiety rose as their life expectancy faded, because even their denial

could not save them from the clutches of advancing ruin. This was made far worse, in that megacity time, for their society in its genius had discovered how to isolate and disempower each and every one of them. The endless streams of bills, notes, and tickets all bore their individual names, as each member of society was personally responsible for every last one. More important were the assigned numbers. It was often a secret moment of pride for the denizens to remember all of their assigned numbers, each one unique, which gave them access to their own special part of the great static field.

Failures were all individualized as well. The denizens were carefully trained to see the great decline as their own fault. They knew, because they were told, that their leaders were great, good, and infallible. The decline picked up momentum because they hadn't worked hard enough, or long enough. It happened because of undesirable elements within the megacities, groups that

wrecked it for everyone. It simply was not possible for the problems to be caused by anything else. They were carefully coached only to think in such ways.

Some amongst them who believed in the religion of the great megacities, told the denizens they lived upon this planet imprisoned. They were sentenced here for the crimes they had done. They convinced the denizens through using contexts and suppositions that the society had become accustomed to, all supported by the power of the moving images, which were the final purveyors of official belief. They joined those who often told the denizens that they were the stuff of a mere genetic experiment, the offspring of an engineered slave race, forgotten and left behind.

The populace believed them, for it suited their carefully crafted self hate, living as they did in the great static field, breathing in the nanodust sprayed upon them. They danced and danced to the frequencies beamed at them with overpowering force, waves they never heard

or knew. They were all born into original wrongness, a mistake, an error that never had the slightest claim to anything higher, than to be glorified farm animals.

Doomed to die out, to be a bad memory, their brightest and their best, who appeared always as moving images, told them all to do as they were bidden. The brightest and smartest, the real success stories treated themselves to lavish spectacles at the denizens' expense, devoured their children and destroyed their potential, much to the accolades of the denizens themselves. Disempowered and isolated, careening into ruin, the denizens bravely paid their bills, convinced it must be so, by the moving images upon the ugly blue screens that kept them up at night, and chased away their natural dreams.

It was the same in every megacity stretched out across the night land. The entrainment took place for all who stared at the ugly blue screens with the moving images, resonating with the great static field under the perpetual buzz of artificial light. For the best of the citizenry knew

they had to keep their society clean. It was difficult, for their fellow citizens were trying to kill them by not doing all they were told, refusing to adopt sensible measures put forth by those moving images. Yet the sameness across the megacities was a great comfort. It made one believe they were more powerful than any decline. It lulled the clean ones into a righteous certainty that they were completely correct.

During those times when the electricity failed, those rare times when the planes and the rockets remained tethered down, just a few who knew of the Others and heard the echoe could detect a subtle pulse. No longer drowned out by the great static field of the massive antennae, the wave was perceivable like the beating of a heart. These few were amazed to perceive it, a silent wave in an ocean of silence. Yet they too were saddened to observe amongst the great numbers of their fellows, that most heard it not.

So it was in the web of the megacities that those very few began to relish those times, those silent times. They alone, when the lights had gone out, dared to disobey and look up, and thus they knew their heresy was true, that the stars lived and even thrived across the night sky.

The megacities across the night land vowed to step up their power, to burn more poison and toxins to keep the great static field abuzz. It was fear that drove the denizens to worship at this task. Stories abounded from those who said they knew that everyone was doomed to violence and disaster without the artificial light, and the moving images upon the ugly blue screens. For the denizens had learned that truth didn't matter. Not one of them really wanted to know why the steep decline, why the looming death, or the increasing times where the static field grew silent. They had faith. They believed. They became through full identification, one with the moving images upon the ugly blue screens.

Each one of them believed their petroleum based medicine was going to help them. They knew those brightly coloured pills, the pink and the yellow and especially the blue were from those great and good powers they never admitted nobody knew. So when the great and the good, and the concerned and the compassionate all became moving images, and told them with rude smirks and derisive giggles that it was time to submit to the scientific serum, even those afraid of needles lined up.

Across the web of megacities spanning the night land, untold numbers grew ill and died. No one could bring themselves to question their beliefs. Some said it was too many waves, so the denizens kept their arms down at their sides as they said goodbye. The decline grew even steeper then, and the illness and the death. It was easy to not notice as the moving images played all day long upon the ugly blue screens.



No one in the night land knew what was happening. They were criminals upon a prison planet, the refuse of genetically modified slaves. Obediently, they never saw the stars. In fear, they never heard the pulse. Yet when looking into each other's eyes they saw the uncertainty there, and they understood that the megacities were dying with their populace.

The fear and the stress increased across the night land. Their leaders advanced solutions that pulled the great towers down. They were assigned shame and guilt, ordered to embrace perversions. If not for those terrible ones within the megacities themselves, the decline would be reversed. The illness would be stopped with the oil based medicine, if not for those who foolishly refused it. They believed, and in their belief they knew the unease.

Over time the darkness that surrounded the artificial light grew more intense. Shadow deepened to an inky impenetrable formlessness, a black expanse where the cultivated madness and the spiders came to play.

Everyone knew about the spiders. They were smart, and very aggressive. They liked the dark, where the denizens could not see them.

The insanity was like an inhalation of smoke. At first it was stifling, making it difficult to breathe. Yet before long the denizens began to like it, even through the coughing and gasping, and the populace wanted more. The smoke of insanity brought with it a certain crisp resolution for the moving images. The images seemed to transform, becoming sages upon the ugly blue screens. They told the refuse of slaves, the cosmic prisoners, all sorts of wonders that simply had to be believed, and all sorts of directions, that just had to be followed.

Soon the night land was abuzz the talk of space ships and aliens, and everyone knew someone who had seen them. The aliens, said the wise one who knew, had come all this way just to save the cosmic criminals from the horrors of the steep decline. The true believers could then

avoid the terrible fate that that their leaders, the moving images repeatedly warned them about.

The darkness and smoke grew ever thicker during those times in the night land. The new nuclear drives, that powered the equally new interfaces, and the fancy new chimes that sang when the denizens did something right, were all powered up in close proximity to the megacity residents. The new levels of power made the artificial light burn brighter, the antennae stronger, exponentially increasing the additions to the static field. The denizens now jerked and twitched through their prison planet lives, but the smart ones weren't worried, because the moving images had told them their uncontrollable tremors were merely due to being the refuse of slaves.

The suffering was enormous, casualties increasing so alarmingly that the figures were severely underreported. The dead piled high; every family had a loved one die. New cults sprang up with the blessing of the moving images. They prayed to the aliens to release them from

their misery. Stories sprang up that the weird ones, those who had said they heard the echoe, had left the megacities, destination unknown. Great anger grew in the megacities then, for it was widely believed that the odd ones, the idiots had escaped on those ships that were meant for the denizens themselves.

The moving images upon the ugly blue screens encouraged the rage and the hate. They found new enemies to bring to public attention, new threats to bombard the denizens with. Conditions in the megacities reached a never before known low. The death and the suffering, and the twitching, and the rage were magnified by the moving images. Increasingly desperate, the populace shouted out answers to their official quiz shows, and when they got the answers right, cricket cereal dropped into their laps from the dispensary installed in every bloc. The moving images were their savior, and the science serum, and the buzzing static field that had nothing to do with the tremors.

There were the voices that no one heard, left behind on tablets and odd scribblings. They came from those very few who had heard the echoe and the pulse in the silence, from those who had defied the orders, and who had beheld the stars. They said impossible things that the denizens dared not believe. Their words were a danger to the lovers of the insanity and blackness. No one took them seriously. What possible solution could lie in thinking beyond the megacity limits?

The response came quickly, to those who had dared to write of so many conspiracy theories and heresies..." You were jealous of the great civilization. You who wrote nonsense are no moving images! You were not the problem solvers who tore down the great towers! No denizen can ever master their lives; they are the cog that keeps the civilization moving, those who pay the bills, and those who know the black oil is good"... The echoe listeners were crazy, but entertaining, in a funny sort of way.

It was quickly reckoned that the funny ones, those idiots who they once knew had nothing to offer. They had never, before their disappearance, held any significant credentials in the night land. They wrote of the beauty of life, when everyone knew they were all made from corporations. They wrote of great potential, when everyone knew the only real potential was in money. They waxed poetic about the gifts from the ineffable, when everyone knew they already had the best of gifts from their leaders, the moving images upon the ugly blue screens.

The inky black smoke became like a substance then, to the denizens. It revealed to them all the beliefs they ever needed. With that powering up of the artificial lights came the corresponding black substance, which seemed to have an ally in the spiders. The spiders arrived one day, partially inorganic, thriving in the dark. They grew bold then, leaving their inky black substance to spread across the megacities. Some said the malevolence of the

spiders terrified them, sent them shivering and afraid. There was no one to help them, for nothing worked against the spiders, not the neurotoxins they sprayed, or the chemicals that damaged the DNA, only bricks or rocks, and there were too many spiders for that to be a solution.

The denizens knew, believed of the greatness of their society. They knew, because they sang, that they were brave and free. They believed in the freedom to lock down entire sectors, quarantine entire populations, shut off the electricity to those who did not believe in their constructed dream.

Those sentenced to lack of light grew brutal then. Left with only the spiders they murdered and devoured each other with a desperate savagery. Their artwork became stacks of trash. Their music animalistic grunts and roars, they forgot most language, and their thinking became cunning. Their currencies were the weapons they shaped from odd shards of glass.

The brave and the free built tall walls then, and hired soldiers to protect the shrinking islands of artificial light. Some said their noble and just leaders had even bigger castles, with even greater armies, and they would be arriving any day to free their people from the cannibals.

War was constant, between the eaters of men and the lovers of the artificial light. Over the years, as the walls fell into ruin, it was forgotten how to bolster them up. In the last of the glow of the sallow electric luminescence, the last of the denizens were about to fall beneath the jagged blades and animal squeals. The final tales were told of the great ones, the good and compassionate and caring ones who appeared as moving images so long ago. They were gods, it was said, who believed they were destined to live forever as machines. No one could remember, exactly what they were called. Nobody had ever seen a machine that became a god.

Just a few recalled, as the last walls fell, and the dream of the megacity was lost, of those idiots who claimed to



hear the echoe. They who had left and no one had seen since. Some might have considered it strange that the idiots were never forgotten. But the storytellers had read their tablets, and memorized their words. Something happened then. The story tellers themselves could almost hear, what they thought was the beating of a heart. They were joined by those children, in whose ocean coloured eyes, the heartbeat was loud and true. They were the future, and the hope, and the reason to brave the journey down afar, and thus with the last of the hot coals wrapped up, from the last of the hearth fires next to the faint yellow light., the decision to follow the hope, and future and destiny was made.

The night land sprawled out in those days, and from down afar no megacities could be seen. It had been rigorous, a long journey, away from the cannibals and the spiders and the weapons of glass. Yet the storytellers reminded all it had been time to go, if there was to be anyone at all preserved. So they had made forth their

journey beyond ruined walls into the darkness and the mysterious waves of the way. They were guided by the heartbeat, that the children could hear, and it never failed to steer them right.

Beyond the night land there were no echoes of the great static field, no waves to scramble their thought and dreams. No nanodust invaded their lungs. No moving images across ugly screens told them what to believe and what to do. Their lives were determined by the process of growing food, and the miracle of life itself. The waves of the seasons brought meaning to their thoughts, and with each other they knew the highest praise. Sometimes, for no reason they would stand in large circles in the open air, joining hands just to feel each other's presence. There they would trust to their grip and they would all lean way back, and look up to behold the stars.





