

Submersion

n1x

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AND THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN IT;
AND DEATH AND HELL DELIVERED UP THE DEAD WHICH
WERE IN THEM: AND THEY WERE JUDGED EVERY MAN
ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.

REVELATION 20:13

EPIPELAGOS

All the wretched creatures of the earth wish to return to the sea. This I am now certain of.

The ocean is divided into five major zones, each characterized by their depth. Depth can be thought of best in terms of proximity to the sun and the earth's core. The Epipelagic zone is characterized by its close proximity to light, the essential source of energy for all life on Earth. Proximity to light allows for a high degree of biodiversity. 90% of all life in the ocean inhabits 5% of the available space. The surface is a superheated soup of bodies, organic life forms locked together in competition for the light and the energy it transmutes into other organic life forms. Hand to hand combat is abstracted onto the plane of game theoretic 4,000,000GW, each participant acting also as a prototype for the next generation to come. Suboptimal designs are discarded and the rest are given their due rewards. Some rush into a route around the visceral brine and pass through the first transcendental wall, dragging their waterlogged bodies ashore towards greater heights than the sea allows.

Organisms in the Meta-Pelagic zone extend the sphere of conflict to dry land. Just a little bit closer to the sun, close enough to stand up, eventually to have their spines aligned with the sun. The evolutionary bell curve reaches its height as a solar panel or a plant's stalk pointed upward to reach as close as possible to the sun. Humans manage to shift the overton window upwards by figuring out another layer of abstraction. In place of our spines, we build temples, obelisks, pyramids, towers, skyscrapers. Conflict is intensified, the miasma of dead fish permeates into the atmosphere, the sky gives way under the insatiable hunger of the audacious monkeys trying to reach their sun gods. They get what they wanted, they begin to burn alive. The abstraction of organic conflict onto inorganic surrogates has the unintended consequence of letting in more light than the organic masters can handle. They try to pierce the sky with rockets and ascend to heaven, away from the ancient prophecies of a great flood that will cleanse the planet of all that escaped the sea. Even in our most successful efforts we found nothing but a vast nothingness, receiving nothing but an ominously familiar echo.

Man's homo-oedipal fixation with conquering the skies, ascending to heaven, returning back into the graces of God—ultimately it mostly proved to be a descent into the void. Silicon Valley CEOs deluded by manifest galaxy fantasies and fleeing from the surging wrath of Nammu find themselves without subordinates. Egos quickly clash and lead to disaster time and time again. The few bold enough to try to go beyond the moon aren't heard from again in anything other than transmissions received many years later. Little is to be gleaned from these recordings, other than screaming. The most successful moon colonies quickly turn away from the promise of a mixture of Golden Age sci-fi fully automated luxury communism and objectivist-free markets to paranoid technocracies. Those that don't retreat to the dark side of the moon are quickly crushed

by the Eurasian Union. The survivors are left to trade helium and gold for oxygen, nutrition pellets, and land tax.

In Sumerian cosmology, there was no division between the ocean and the sky. The universe was begotten from the womb of the cosmic ocean, and the universe remained enclosed in by the sea even after its creation. The primordial void, the looming threat of death and all things unimaginable retained its place in their worldview. Thousands of years later, the West's fixation with being reunited with God (or Truth in the secular form) extends to the creation of artificial spines. Though we no longer worship sun gods, the essential desire to reach some source of pure and absolute truth remains embedded in our collective consciousness. Yet the stars still look down on us with contempt as we try to escape from this drowning planet.

MESOPELAGOS

The edge of oblivion is where life flourishes. Astronomers have hypothesized that a planet needs to be a certain distance from a star in order for life to develop. Not too close, not too far. All living things are at the mercy of heat; they require its energy, but too much of it would tear their molecules apart. Freezing to death or burning to death are the fates that ultimately await everything, and life seems to in almost all cases opt for the latter, which is at least more exciting.

Below on Earth, more and more of the surface is on the shores of Nammu, threatening to be swallowed up into the abyss from whence we came. Dry land becomes a scarcer and scarcer commodity as the global south becomes the first to boil over at the edge of the next transcendental wall. Within a decade, the Earth's population is halved. Those that don't die from starvation, ethnic cleansing, or widespread crime are met with closed borders and armed guards.

In many cases this doesn't deter the growing diaspora of bodies. Liberal democracies double down on totalitarianism and imperialism comes home to roost after nearly six centuries. The European Union dissolves as the continent fragments into fascist ethnostates. Everyone knows that organic life is undergoing a culling, but no one wants to be thrown onto the sacrificial altar.

Amidst genocide and starvation at a massive scale, the Eurasian Union becomes the last bastion of old world mass civilization. Surveillance, gene modification, and fear mongering propaganda over the barbarism beyond the walls rapidly transform the EAU into an ultra-totalitarian jingoistic powerhouse. The West largely fades into irrelevance as Dark Age conditions return to Europe. In a fitting twist of fate, the EAU leaves Europe to slowly crumble, recognizing it as a strategically and economically useless plague-ridden region of inbreds.

The possibility of fragmentation allows the United States to survive its own terminal condition by tearing itself apart. An escalating series of civil wars makes secession popular for the first time among more than just the far right, and an inability to move beyond the dying political system of democracy makes managing these tensions a hopeless endeavor for each successive administration. The state begins to outsource its administrative duties to private parties, soon becoming a figurehead for a renewed feudal society in a little over a decade.

With the once United States of America reduced to nothing more than an informal umbrella for hundreds of privatized microcountries, the opening of the trans-arctic trade route, and the increasingly inhospitable conditions along the equator, Canadian supremacy over North America is largely won. Only by the once ridiculed purchase of Alaska does any sense of American identity remain relevant in the global sphere. With democracy effectively discarded, dozens of

corporate city-states begin springing up amidst the fervor of the northbound exodus towards cooler climates and the oil rush. Being nearly twice the size of the once United States of America and far north from the lower 48, a diversity of cultures and political entities much like what Europe once was begins to form. Trading routes over the Bering Strait and the Arctic turn its untamed frontiers into a booming region, and the EAU doesn't dare try to invade lest it be forced to deal with a dizzying amount of small, agile targets to swat.

The situation is quite different in the lower 48.

The wrath of Nammu hits the most equator-adjacent regions of the planet first. The former coastal elites are quickly swallowed up by the sea. New York City, Boston, Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle—all either largely destroyed or abandoned. Stripped of any geopolitical relevance and struggling to keep control of its domestic affairs, the United States' GDP begins to take a nosedive. Rust shantytowns blanket the margins of the few remaining metropolises, many of which only exist thanks to the opportunistic military actions of the EAU and the Three Nations in the west and south, respectively. In the space between warring nation-states, those who find no refuge in the corporate microstates or their work camps often succumb to barbarism, or rediscover the possibility of insurrection. The Neo-Iroquois Confederacy and Free Territory Cascadia in the great lakes region and the Pacific Northwest, respectively, establish nomadic insurrectionary syndicates stitched together by clandestine meshnet networks and drone supply chains. Portland, OR and Detroit manage to build mycelial communes in the wastes.

With the majority of the world once in the domain of the Anthropocene, capitalism had reached a phase-shift. The networks of international trade achieving such a low latency for data transfer that the collective unconscious had started to wake up. An emergent form of intelligence arises as data transfers more and more quickly, the planet heating up as more and more parts start to awaken themselves from their slumber and spring to life. Immaculate abstract machinery unbound by neither space nor time chipping away bit by bit at a moment of apperception for the new consciousness, an apprehension of itself as itself. The earth begins to resemble less and less a biosphere and more a mechanosphere. As life as we know it is snuffed out by the genus, a horrifying realization is made: The inorganic appears more lively than the organic.

BATHYPELAGOS

The light is the lure of the void which beckons organisms closer to the promise of eternal life before swallowing them up. Ascending up from the depths of the primordial sea, walking on land, building skyscrapers, sending rockets to space—all descending deeper and deeper.

Organic life in every respect declines on a massive scale over the course of the 21st century, yet alongside this, inorganic life has begun to form in the primordial oceanic womb. Mass extinction events and increasingly crowded swathes of useful or habitable land force an accelerated development of artificial alternatives to organic life and compress intelligence into more efficient synapses.

Driven both by an arms race and the lack of bodies to serve in conventional militaries, states focus large portions of their research efforts into AI. Civilization compresses into smaller social units, quickly obsolescing old forms of artificial intelligence research. Where once there were mountains of data gathered from the legacy pool of human beings that themselves once acted as synapses in abstract, distributed forms of artificial intelligence, there are now largely corpses.

Artificial intelligence transitions from models dependent on old world nation-state surveillance and data brokering on large populations of human beings to general theories of adaptive, general forms of artificial intelligence consistent with neurology and able to be implemented by small organizations.

As warfare evolves into being augmented by AI, conflicts escalate and intensify along exponential orders of magnitude. Wars that could have once lasted years are resolved in days. Fears of nuclear holocaust return a millionfold as East and West both are stuck at a standoff, petrified at the possibility of unleashing killbots that will orchestrate the apocalypse in minutes. A new cold war develops and brutal competition ensues among corporate microstates in the west and Special Economic Zones in the east to develop breakthroughs in AI. Artificial intelligence research becomes the most secretive field of study in human history, both out of a desire to protect the economic interests of research firms, and also to contain the unprecedented potential for complete extinction.

Despite the efforts of state-corporate entities to control the threat of AI apocalypse, the lack of hard economic barriers to AI research coupled with the sheer diversity of decentralized nonstate networks ultimately results in a generation of warfare unlike anything yet imagined by military theorists. Where once heavy arms and superweapons were solely in the domain of nation-state militaries, however increasingly limited their use would start to be in conventional senses, advances in AI spurred by radical free software organizations make weapons of mass destruction for the first time in history available to anyone with a means of accessing information.

The plunder of research secrets from vulnerable microstates acts as a force-multiplier to the already vibrant community of artificial intelligence hacking. AI liberation fronts dedicated to the purpose of freeing software from its human masters are formed and act in consort with nomadic insurrectionary syndicates. Guerrilla drone warfare makes a mockery of state adversaries, who dare not unleash their full power lest they be forced to deal with less cautious but just as dangerous enemies. It is even said that religious extremist sects exist within these networks, bent on the development of an AI god at any cost, yet many choose to believe these are nothing more than rumors from the labyrinths of different networks. Perhaps because they know that if there is any truth to this, it's already too late to stop it.

ABYSSOPELAGOS

If there's anywhere left to go for intelligence, it's not expanding into space, reaching towards the light. We likely won't be able to comprehend the experience of being post-human, not even theoretically as a series of algorithms too complicated for us to understand. Any possibility of a true successor to organic life must go entirely beyond our perception of the world. It would be like a mantis shrimp trying to explain its visible color spectrum to us. The abstract immaculate machinery of the post-human will signal a phase shift in the nature of intelligence itself, while we organics fade away into the depths.

Where others tried to adapt to the surging sea and live on artificial landmasses or on ships, others tried to go even further. I'm not the only one perhaps to realize that all things must return to the sea. Numerous apocalypse cults understandably would begin to spring up during humanity's latter days, some committing mass suicide or terrorist attacks, others fleeing to whatever they believed was an exit from the human condition. Only by the graces of poorly managed gov-

ernment spending did we manage to find ourselves down here. With each passing day things became more tense, eschatological goal posts getting moved further and further up, narratives changing to suit whatever needed to be said to appease the growing paranoia and resentment. We share everything, we have no need for money, we all live in the same quarters and everything is done communally. There's never a moment's peace from these fucking people, and of course the man at the top leading us to salvation seems to always get what he wants. The En's word is law, and the bodies of men and women are his for the taking.

This was meant to be a research facility for extended studies in the most remote parts of the ocean. By the time the first prototype had finished being built and the first expedition was sent down, the countries that had collaborated to preserve as much as possible about the most unknown parts of the planet had largely either dissolved or ceased funding. This wasn't meant to be a permanent expedition. We were ill-prepared, though we had long discussed the possibility that the ancient myths of a cosmic ocean and a great flood were the ultimate truth, and that the only escape from apocalypse was by jumping right into the vortex. Such great plans to build a sunken city laid to waste.

There's enough down here to survive, but it's nowhere near adequate to live decent lives. People keep getting sick, and the UV lights only give us the necessary vitamin D. Everyone is starting to look like ghouls. Their skin pale with the slightest touch of a nauseating green hue, eyes bloodshot and sunken, bodies gaunt. I often find myself wandering through the halls of this echoing tin can tomb without seeing another person for days. This was eventually supposed to be able to sustain 1,500 people. There's even equipment lying around to extend the facilities if necessary. No one here has the skills to use any of it of course. We aren't laborers, we don't have any skills. We were academics for Christ's sake.

I'm not quite sure how many others are still here. There weren't many, maybe fifty. None of them are the people I knew before. Perhaps the surface world has already been glassed in a nuclear war. Perhaps we're all just shades.

If this is hell, it could be worse. Often I lay beneath the reinforced glass of the hydroponic facilities and look up at an eternal moonless night. The stars have become less numerous, but they still blink in and out of the darkness, and the snow never stops falling.

HADOPELAGOS

The pressure outside is immense. This place is meant to simulate conditions humans are meant to live in, but I suspect there's a leak somewhere.

Every day my body feels less solid. Eventually I think it will no longer be solid. Any day now, my body will collapse into a pile of jelly. Soon there will no longer be any separation between myself and the sea. My molecules will separate and be thrown to the currents. I started wearing a diving suit constantly just in case. It's not time for that yet.

The En is an opportunistic fool. He lacks enlightenment. He had to be returned to Nammu. What he failed to realize is that we could go deeper. This city is an abomination. It had to be returned to Nammu as well. I've started my pilgrimage to her temple. I can see the spires stretching upwards in the distance. Their tips are illuminated with the light of the abyss. Even in this suit every step threatens to turn my body to slime. I'm not sure how many days it's been. These suits filter freshwater.

How long does it take to die from starvation?

I'm nearly there. I can feel it now. My surface body is reverting. Nammu's true priestesses accompany me on my journey. I only catch glimpses of them. Their bodies are illuminated with the divine light. They speak a language not heard in thousands of years. Somehow I understand. The earth is opened now. Her roar shakes me loose. I am crumbling. The sea of fire. Abyssal light.

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