

In The Wake of the Electron Storm

The first thing the electron storm does is to wipe out everybody's memory of it but yours.

First there is the night - the raging winds that come from somewhere other than this world. The trails that stream across the sky as though the stars themselves have become unhinged, even while they remain fixed in the blackness. You stand with the others--there is not a soul that has not been drawn outside to wonder and marvel at the driving storm of energy and light and sound.

You stand with the others--you have been drawn together, united in your awe of the mystery of the storm, and in your very humanity, which forbids you the knowledge to understand it. You speak in whispers, you hold hands and embrace each other, you tremble with terror at the possibilities, and then you weep with joy at the potential. You feel at One with all the others; your brothers and sisters, your lovers and parents and teachers. The storm, which sings with the music of eternity and flows with colors that have no name, has brought you all together.

At first the radio and the television have preempted all programming to talk about the storm. In the places of the world where it was not night, the sun has been obscured and the sky turned as black as your own, and as filled with the streaming color out of space. Or perhaps it was your own sky that has prematurely lost its day. It does not matter--for the storm seems to have suspended time itself.

Eyewitness reports are beamed in from around the world. Television cameras cannot film it; the light is invisible to the cameras' eye--so they settle for talking heads instead. Radio microphones cannot record it; it is a sound that stirs the brain, but not the air--so they settle for voices instead. Religious leaders prophecy the end of the world; the beginning of peace; the second coming of the messiah, or the first--depending on point of view; the opening of the eye of God. Scientists postulate and hypothesize; clouds of "Dark Matter"; swirling streams of solar winds ejected from an unseen supernova; a river of antimatter, a black hole, a cosmic abyss. Religion and science finally merge in their unknowingness.

The night wears on; the longest night in the history of the world, and the television and radio reports grow thin; nobody is listening, is watching, anyway, and those manning the controls one by one leave their posts to step out into the gusting wind of eternity, to be bathed in the invisible light and the inaudible sound of the electron storm.

Highways are jammed with cars their drivers have left behind. Planes are drawn out over the ocean, where they run out of fuel and plunge into the deep, their passengers craning out the window with the last of their time for one final glimpse. Commerce comes to a stop; wars attain an unspoken truce. Stores are left unguarded, no one there to

protect them, no one there to steal.

And finally, on the edge of the borderline where memory fades and something like sleep overtakes you, you begin to sense the Others--swimming the current of the storm like fish in a roaring stream. Entering the air through bursting bubbles in space, as many, it seems, as there are people watching them; people now struck silent at their strangeness. And then, just as you are about to grasp it--to somehow understand--the darkness overtakes you, and when the storm finally passes, you are no longer awake to see it go.

In the wake of the electron storm, you are the only one who remembers. The oneness you felt with the rest of your kind is not shared anymore by those who pass you on the street. Money changes hands again; the dead are mourned or forgotten, hatreds are rekindled. You are the only one who remembers, and in remembering, are walled away from the rest of the world more than any prisoner in a cell.

Your family fears you, your friends desert you, those who do not know you wish you would go away. When you try to explain you are shut up, and shut out, and there are those who will do violence to you, if they can.

You begin to wonder if it was only a dream. But in the shadow of a passing cloud, or the sudden glare of the setting sun, you catch a glimpse of the Others out of the corner of your eye, and you know that you are not wrong, you are only alone.

You do not know if the world has changed, or if it is only you. But in the end you realize that it does not matter. You are like a fallen angel, rending the fabric of the world with your descent, and twisted and fused into matter as you fall. All is changed; nothing is the same.

And the winds of the storm blow in your memory, like the winds that blow over the desert, changing the world with their passing. You are the sand; you are a dune - growing, shrinking, shifting. As long as there is a horizon, the wind will blow you there. You no longer have anything to fear.

The worst has finally come, and it is nothing more or less than the same it has always been.

D. S. Marks

D.S. Marks lives and writes in the Catskill Mountains of New York, with her Life Partner, three mongrel cats, and an Australian Shepherd pup. When she leaves her house, it is usually to renew herself by walking in the woods. Her short story, "Thief of Fire", has been published in the online magazine The Harrow.