

Stationcity Drums

by S. J. MacKenzie

Deep in Stationcity they began to drum. Softly at first the higher reaches of the world felt it through the fabric of their habitats. Polite conversations dropped off, gasps were heard, heartbeats skipped and tall drinks crashed to the floors of big money cocktail parties. Stronger and louder the drums became, reverberating through steel and carbon structures, echoing in long forgotten ice tunnels, beating a march out from the dark centre. Ears pricked up in cargo holds and smoky bars. Transients unplugged from deep-VR consoles and felt a shiver pass the 'trode arrays on emaciated backs. Gutter-rat kids left their boards to rattle through the old malls and turned their heads, yammering in the blended tongues of new dialects. Workers downed tools. Security tapped on terminals, leaders gone frantic, shouting into mouthpieces. Platoons were hastily mustered. All the time the drumming grew, dark, regular, relentless.

Ships were put in holding patterns. Sections were locked down. In all the outer areas of Stationcity, the Authority armed up and bedded down, coring into datasets, extrapolating ancient simulations, modelling the chaos of the next few hours and days. Long disregarded Cassandras were petitioned out from retirement, given new respect and titles. City fathers shuffled nervously. Markets crashed. Credit was sent down luminal pathways to outer orbitals, safe havens and old planetary banks. And the drums beat on.

New races and old dynasties shivered and cast each other long feared looks. People of all shades and provenance stripped off jewellery, deactivated tattoos, called back avatars and divested share holdings. Fast ships tore off from magnetic moorings and were chased forlornly by port authority patrols. The rings and dust clouds of the system teemed with fearful refugees. Panic coursed through the connected classes of the world. The drums had begun. The drums, calling on tomorrow, beating the rhythm of changes unimaginable. The people were rising. Stationcity was alive at last to the potential of its terrors. The drums beat up from deep in the cold

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dark passageways of ancient lost channels in old foundation rock.
And the humans came behind them, drumming, drumming,
drumming.

