

Negative Waves

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An astronaut soared alone in an escape pod, somewhere out in deep space, far from home. Panic trickled through his blood as he saw the expanding horizon of Planet RR7349 coming into view. He adjusted the oxygen level in his spacesuit, checked his harnesses, and braced for impact. The pod crash-landed on the planet and the astronaut was ripped from his seat, thrown into steel walls repeatedly, until his body fell as limp as a white flag, unconscious. Hours later, he awakened, startled, not only at the discovery of still being alive, but also because there was now, mysteriously, another astronaut aboard with him.

He was dead. That much was noticeable upon first glance of his blood-soaked spacesuit. The corpse sat in the seat directly across from the astronaut, the only other seat inside the pod, which before the crash was unoccupied. He was certain of this. It wasn't a simple case of amnesia or the result of some terrible brain trauma. There was no one in the pod with him before collision. No one. *So who was this man?*

Bleep.

The sound tore through the silence like a razor. It was a sound he recognized as the GPS system on his suit. *The target must be within range*, he thought, and looked down at his wrist where the device was located. Curiously, the blip was not the "target" he suspected it was. Instead, the only words that appeared in the info box when he poked at the map onscreen were the words, "Negative Waves." He wasn't sure what these "Negative Waves" were exactly, but if his GPS was functioning correctly, then they were the only objects within twenty miles of his location. He had the choice of either setting out in other directions, possibly finding nothing at all and dying in the process, or he could chase the Negative Waves. He settled on chasing the Negative Waves.

Being the decent man he was, the astronaut refused to leave a man behind, even if the man was a dead unknown, so he strapped the corpse to his suit with a contraption fashioned from one of the seat belt harnesses, and dragged the body along with him as he trekked across the dusty alien terrain.

A few miles out, he stopped to rest a moment, deciding it as best a time as any to go through the pack of the dead astronaut. He hoped he would find food. He couldn't even remember the last time he ate anything. There was no food in the pack. In fact, the only item he discovered was a black container, the size of a shoebox, with the words, "For Use Against the Negative Waves" written across the lid in large white letters. He thought about opening it to discover the relic hidden inside, but resisted out of fear it was time-sensitive. It would be best to wait until he caught up to the Negative Waves, he thought, and returned the container to the pack. He started walking again, in the direction of the Negative Waves.

Soon enough he was able to see the Negative Waves in the distance before him. They appeared to be more of a *wall* than an *ocean*, as the astronaut initially expected, a wall of a thousand spinning mirrors, all revolutions out of time with one another. It was around this time that the corpse began to speak.

“Jericho,” the dead astronaut said, gasping for air as if he was drowning. His body arched as he spoke, and he flailed his arms around wildly, slapping the backs of the living astronaut’s legs as he walked. The astronaut spun around in horror, but before he could see anything the corpse had already fallen back into death. He shrugged it off, chalking it up as an unsettling hallucination brought on by the oncoming Negative Waves.

This happened twice more on the journey, each time the corpse clawed more and more violently at the astronaut’s legs as he shouted that same curious word, “Jericho.” The astronaut saw nothing when this happened, still thinking all he was hearing and feeling was an illusion brought on by the Negative Waves. They were now less than a mile away and the astronaut felt an uncomfortable heaviness on both his chest and inside his skull. He feared he did not have enough protection, so he stripped the cadaver of its spacesuit and doubled it over his own.

Upon doing this, it was revealed to the astronaut that the corpse’s skin was covered completely in text, “The Book of Joshua” from *The Holy Bible*, to be precise, written in ink. The astronaut leaned down and read a random passage: “When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it.”

“Jericho,” the corpse again shouted, this time gripping the astronaut’s back, clinging onto the man in such a panic it sent his heart straight up his throat. Seconds later the body returned to the dusty ground, lifeless. The astronaut stood stunned, unable to move out of fear and pulsing adrenaline. He stared at the pale, almost translucent, skin of the corpse, the contrast of the dark text written upon it, and another passage caught his eye: “Cursed before the Lord is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho.”

The Waves. The goddamn Negative Waves, he thought, and for the first time on his journey he felt he wasn’t strong enough to continue on. Then he remembered the box, the container labeled, “For Use Against the Negative Waves.” Though he hadn’t yet made it to the foot of massive wall that was the Negative Waves, he figured he was as close as he’d ever get, so he removed the box from the pack and quickly threw it open. Inside was a single trumpet carved from a ram’s horn.

He examined the trumpet and could not understand how the instrument would be of any assistance in his battle against the Negative Waves, but this was all he had. His only chance. He blew into its end and from it blared a sharp, fierce surge of vibrations. The Negative Waves appeared to respond to it, seeming more ethereal now than it had been before. He continued to blow into the horn until all the Negative Waves were destroyed.

Perhaps just as curious as the fall of the Negative Waves was the sudden animation of the corpse, also elicited by the trumpet. The sound caused the dead man to stand and hop around the astronaut, naked, clapping his hands, dancing and shouting nonsense at the Negative Waves as they disappeared into nothingness. As soon as the trumpet left the astronaut’s lips, the corpse once again fell into death, collapsing to the dirt.

Bleep.

The astronaut looked at his wrist and examined the new blip appearing on his GPS screen. More Negative Waves, about ten miles out.

He strapped the corpse to the harness and again set out on his journey, forever chasing the Negative Waves.

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