

Pawn has moved this past weekend, and just wants to share a few words about that. Here they are:



That night. That cold crisp night that he watched the comet streak overhead. That night was the last that he could be said to have been responsible for his own actions. Not that he had exercised any great care in living his life up until this point. It's just that in that strange and generous calculus which we apply to the decision making powers of the artistic class, he had been cut a lot of slack. Up until the night that comet cut a gash in the night sky and everything changed.

She wasn't with him then, not sharing his appreciation for late night walks in the less than safe neighborhood in which they dwelt. She was back in the flat starting another novel and finishing another bottle of merlot. That is how it was, in those days; she, his erstwhile muse, had no muse of her own save bottle and book, while he, numb and tired of losing her every night to those twins, he strode away each night to find some peace within.

There was no peace without, it was all traffic noise and loud conversation in the immigrant heavy district. It was a symphony in rare parts - the low hum of the sodium-vapor lights, the rich indecipherable patois emanating from the myriad open windows, the staccato rhythm of the tram wheels as they teased and taunted the edges of the cobblestone that still poked up in several sections of the aging pavement. On top of all of that was the static crackle of the power arcing from the overhead lines to the commutators of the trams themselves. A festival of sounds spanning a century converged in his little part of creation and drew him out of himself and away from the tempestuous storm which was brewing in the synapses of his drunken muse back home, back at the flat, steeping herself in cheap reds and that special sense of betrayal which age visits upon those whose ambition has been left behind.

The comet, he did not know, was early. He was no student of these things, of astronomy, nor did he have any special interest in the facts behind it. He knew only that as he walked east there was a smudgy line arcing across the sky which he could not recall having seen before. Comets are known for their punctuality, they are the timekeepers of the heavens, in the sense of the apito; that whistle blown to keep the Amazonian rivers of musicians in Carnival's parade on tempo. Much as the leader toots the apito as he runs up and down the length of the bataria to keep all those drummers in sync, the comets race around the firmament keeping all of the celestial watches synchronized. Until that night.

All of the best minds in science agreed that comet Shinberg-Takie was not due until 21:13 Zulu Time on 3 February. Shinberg-Takie had other plans it seemed. He did not understand this, nor would he come to appreciate the peculiar effects it was to have on his life as he entered into the gravitational tug of the comet that night. It was 10:45 on the 2nd of February when he left for his stroll, and Shinberg-Takie was already making a show in the eastern sky. At 6:35 that evening, the large dish at Arecibo, Puerto Rico, was trained towards the eastern heavens. It operated in concert with much smaller optical telescopes from Yerkes to Griffith Park and points all over the globe as astronomers and astrophysicists struggled to understand how their eagerly awaited guest could possibly have arrived a full day early. One young graduate student in Berkeley's sleepy astronomy department was watching the screens that night and before anyone else had noticed, he was already aware of the odd pull of ST-2008. He could no longer be held accountable either. He was already looking eastward, and waiting.

It was 8:35 in Rio and the stout yet fearsome bataria leader could not find his apito. How, he worried, would his beloved bataria sound without the steadying rhythmic guidance of his apito? The light in the eastern sky barely even registered as he, too, entered into its metaphysical orbit.

Shinberg-Takie had captured three souls by 21:45 Zulu. They all looked to the east and waited.