



Radio Dark

Shane Hinton

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In Shane Hinton's post-apocalyptic novella *Radio Dark*, a horrifying epidemic creeps upon the known world, ending its normalcy in a flash and rendering people static.

The affected freeze in place—holding buckets of minnows, idling in their cars, or standing before grocery displays, unblinking. Bouncing balls roll into gutters and communications cease. In the immediate aftermath, government agents fan out, seeking to stymie the country's collapse.

In Florida, an FCC agent connects with Memphis, a radio station worker. They work together with the station's DJ to secure a radio signal and draw other survivors in.

The details of this new world are both gruesome and quiet, varying from a survivor's infected and decaying hands, to the miasma of rot, to a cobbled together radio tower that is, in fact, a collection of assembled, frozen human beings stretching skyward.

As more people arrive, the tower grows "narrower and narrower ... to a point with a single young woman in a thin brown dress." At its edges, survivors subsist, and at their fringes, a cult lurks, sounding trumpet blasts and declaring that there's holiness in the silence.

In these brief pages, survival is portrayed as rote—a matter of eating, copulating, disassociating, and mitigating all expectations and desires. Even among the active, no characters are named save Memphis. People are known by their roles and nothing else, and any assertion of vivacity or acknowledgement of individuality comes at too high a cost to consider.

The book's images are as incisive as razors. It breaks open notions of human intimacy to examine their blood and bits, its gaze unflinching and its diagnosis less than promising. In the visceral and sharp novella *Radio Dark*, the end of the world is synonymous with the cessation of human hope.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July/August 2019)

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