



STATIC

Unexplained Airwaves

Some radio transmissions carry with them inexplicable messages whose origins are shrouded in mystery and shadows. Are they from other worlds? We don't know who made them, or what they are saying. But they continue to haunt us their raspy messages.

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Chris Clement played with the radio dials on the short wave set. He and Danny Belker liked to listen for the spooky channels on the low band end of the radios' range. They sat deep darkness of the Clement basement; the air filled with the strong scent of mold. Tools, some of them rusty, hung off the cement block walls. The boys enjoyed spending time listening to the stations broadcasting nothing but numbers, with the occasional snippet of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. It was the kind of scare you could experience in the dark safely. A good jump-fright to get your blood pumping. Mostly what they heard was intermittent bangs, thumps, shuffling, and what sounded like the faint traces of garbled, unintelligible conversations. It felt like wiretapping the devil. The kind of thing designed to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.

But tonight, all they got was wavering radio static. Chris turned the volume up. Danny saw the creature rise from the floor behind Chris. It was as if the static on the airwaves had called a demon into being. His power grew with the crackle over the speaker. Danny was too terrified to say anything, and Chris hadn't yet seen him. The creature was a pale imitation of a humanoid. Its faceless all-black skin looked as if it was melted wax dripping over its bones rather than organically growing over its frame. The creature's fingers seemed impossibly long. Even now, Danny could remember the sight of each six-fingered hand. It was seared into his brain.

The creature grabbed a shovel off the wall, and it crashed down on Chris' skull. Chris' head landed on the table with a dull splat, but his body kept jerking around spasmodically. Danny still couldn't move; he was frozen with fear. The creature's lipless mouth smiled knowingly and malevolently at Danny. The thing took a crosscut saw off the wall and started working on Chris' neck. Blood spurted everywhere. Danny felt his arms and legs weighed down as if encased in lead and held by shackles. Danny could hear the crunch of the saw's teeth as they worked away on Chris' spine.

In the end, there was a sickening thud as Chris' head rolled onto the floor. Grabbing one of Danny's arms, the creature's otherworldly grip forced the blood-splattered saw handle in the young boy's hand. Danny didn't hold on to it for long and it soon clattered to the floor. The creature turned to the knob on the radio and lowered the volume of the crackling static. As the sound of the static dropped the creature became more insubstantial. Its power over Danny dissipated and he began to scream. It dissolved like some terrible morning fog when the volume reached zero and the radio shut off with a click. Danny kept screaming until Chris' father reached the bottom of the steps.

Not surprisingly, one believed Danny's story. His attorney had tried to get him off by pleading insanity, but Danny wouldn't agree. He somehow felt responsible. Why, he asked repeatedly, hadn't the creature killed him instead of Chris? After all, he had seen it. In the end, his fingerprints on the saw convinced the jury Danny had used the instrument to kill his friend. The prosecutor convinced them no other explanation was believable. Danny spent the next eighteen years in solitary confinement at Huntsville prison.

This part didn't bother him. He felt he deserved it. He should have warned Chris, he should have been able to say something. Perhaps it was his fault after all. But the worst part of it happened at night. Danny could hear the creature's voice laugh over the loudspeaker as the warden called lights out. Its voice was a strange enigmatic call, lingering between the crackle of the prison speaker.