

Hydro Dam's Anthem

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Run for the hills when the flood sirens blare. Three deafening tones followed by a monotonous white noise – remember that siren. It was designed to stand out against the howling wind rushing over the seawall. Calm yourself, especially in the night. The white noise will help you locate the spillways where the water will come. Run. Run far away from them.

You always watched sunlight shine through the mist atop the Hydrodyne seawall. Rainbows would appear in the vapor, but only briefly. Most of the day we spend in the wall's shadow; its silhouette traced across the hills to the West. Kids would always chase the sunlight as the shadow moved through the settlement in the mornings. But notice the periodic peaks that disrupt its otherwise straight silhouette, those are the watchtowers. Each is equipped with 120-megapixel sensors for visible and infrared light. They are the eyes of the Overseers, hiding in plain sight. You only notice them during the occasional bright flash when sunlight reflects off the lens elements at just the right angle.

You must have wondered what a sunrise looks like. There are a few paths leading up the hill, climb up during the early morning and you'll see the Sun as it rises above the seawall. But it is merely a glimpse, a true sunrise occurs just beyond the horizon. A horizon blocked by the seawall; a horizon you will never see. Be careful up on the hills. Do not stand out in the open where the watchtowers can identify you. They do not like it when people go that far.

From there, you can see the Dockett Group launch platforms to the North. I know you don't care much for these orbital launches, but just watch them for a moment. The rocket trails start close to the ground but make a gradual turn upwards until they shoot through the clouds. You only see that with Dockett Group vehicles. They are launched on slanted structures to maximize payload capacity. Notice how in-atmosphere flights avoid the launch platforms. There's a three-kilometer no-fly zone around it to avoid any interference. Remember that. No flight can reach the seawall from the North.

People look to these launches for hope, hope that they too could one day live in orbit like the Overseers. But you must see them for what they are – cargo ships. They carry raw materials, clean water, and most importantly, hydrogen peroxide. That's the propellant that keeps the

habitats in orbit. Without us, they fall out of the sky. That is why we are here. The L3 designation means that the seawall can support not just a settlement, but a hydrogen peroxide production plant that's further West. Look at the records for floods, they line up perfectly with the plant's oxidization cycles. The seawall needs to let in more water to produce that much power, and that's when it floods. Just a single battery from those orbital habitats will be enough to mitigate the power shortage and stop these floods. But Hydrodyne says the sea is our battery. No, the sea is no battery, we are just expendable.

At dusk, you could sometimes see the orbital habitats as tiny dots in the sky. Do not mistake them for stars. Do not mistake the open air for freedom. We are not here by choice. Further inland lies certain death, whereas here we can at least survive. That is not a choice, it is a threat.

There is a maintenance walkway halfway up the seawall. It's loud there, the water rushing through the outlets right below the metal grating. You can only understand the true scale of a Hydrodyne L3 seawall when you're right next to it. They call it a seawall, but it's no different than those hydroelectric dams from centuries ago. The same old principles wrapped in a new name. The scale is just incomprehensible now. Instead of containing a river, it now contains the sea.

Those support arches are hundreds of meters longer than they need to be. Remember that this is how they project power and stability. Behind this façade lies fear. Fear that such power may one day dissipate; fear that they may not be able to play god. There is no power here, just a desperate attempt to uphold a fragile mask. It requires continual maintenance because it is so artificial. There is no ridge formation, just concrete and rebar. Every push weakens the dam. Every flood, every high tide, every footstep. To Hydrodyne, every small crack is a threat. But the dam is brittle, and the cracks will always grow. Press your hand against this wall. Feel what they fear most – the slightest of vibrations.

They thrive on our complacency. Our silence soothes their fears. But make no mistake, they are afraid, and they will do anything to keep us compliant. Do your best to blend in. Appear harmless, never giving them a hint of your disdain. But the day will come when their exploitation grows too intense, your suffering too great to ignore the fact that you are nothing more than a statistic to them. In their blind greed, they would have taken too much and left you too little. In

that arrogance lies their mistake. You fight best when there is nothing more to lose. Raise your gaze to meet their hydro dam, and look beyond at that horizon you cannot see.

But you must understand what you are about to begin. This rage, once fostered, does not let go of you easily. Once the façade falls, all you can see are the lies. This is a dangerous road, tread carefully from this point forward. Begin by observing their operations. Make note of when the morning shift arrives on platform 7. Watch the carrier's flight patterns – how it circles during take-off, how it hovers right before landing. Go through old blueprints of the hydro dam. Memorize its inlet depth, its turbine speeds, and its penstock length. Study how some of the intake is fed into the Shard supercomputer's cooling system. This is not a simple structure. It has been refined over centuries, weakened but never fallen. It will be here long after you are gone.

Soon you will realize that the dam is not defenseless. It is armed to defend against external attacks. Every fifth arch houses an energy turret. They are autonomous and rely on the watchtowers for aim. But remember, the laser will overwhelm the watchtowers when fired at night. Each turret effectively goes blind for four seconds after every shot. Energy weapons are not the most deadly, your wounds are scorched shut by the laser. The kinetic weapons will leave you bleeding until you die. There is no hope of surviving such a confrontation. Even when all else fails, their orbital bombardment will level this settlement.

There are times when the dam will seem insurmountable. Its foundations too robust, its defenses too impenetrable. It will trap you in its shadow, loom over you as if mocking your insignificance. Let it mock you. Let it be known that you fight not because you stand a chance, but because it is the only way to rebel against this system. We are not guided by hope. We have never seen the horizon we fight for. We do not even know if there is a horizon. To rebel is an act of desperation. It is a leap of faith. It is the insanity to dare to dream in a broken world.

The Overseers fear us because we enlist unknowingly and spontaneously in the centuries-old war against them. Like the ocean waves that pound against their dams, individually, we are insignificant, but together, we are ruthless. Slowly, there will be cracks, and those cracks will form leaks. I dream of a world without hydro dams, yet I cannot envision what that might look like. I have never known a world without these walls, not even in my dream can I escape their iron cage.

These battles are not fought because they can be won. Countless others have tried. Disabling the turbines, cutting power lines, and even using the 18-hour communications blackout. All have failed. The Overseers even sent down Espers to ensure full compliance. But this is far from the end. These may be their facilities, but we run this place. Production, maintenance, it all relies on us. We each have our roles, and we know them like the back of our hands. Combined, we understand this system better than any Overseer. They can't even walk in Earth's gravity; they couldn't even try if they wanted.

Change will come. One too many demands, one too many floods – one by one people will see things for the way they truly are. In time, the cracks will form, and you will find yourself amidst an army. No longer alone, no longer afraid. But it is important not to get lost in these conflicts. You are a dreamer, not a soldier. Never lose sight of why you rebelled in the first place. Always dare to dream, not of breaching the hydro dams, but of a world where we live in harmony with the sea, where life is not given nor taken by the dams, and we are not mere cogs in their machine. Learn to swim in your free time. The reservoir by the water treatment plant is a good place to start. Read through catalogs of the surviving marine life. We know little about what is out there. What we need are visions that will guide those who come after us.

Your ideas will fail, and these protests will be dealt with. In your last days, the dam will stand strong, towering over the landscape. Your life's work would have made but a small chip in its foundation. Let it be so. Remember, it is not the outcome that matters, but the act itself. You never gave them the compliance they so desperately need. Imagine the sunrise just beyond the horizon. Burn. Let it burn bright in this darkest night.

Stand on the walkway the next time it floods. Listen to the sea as it pours through the spillways. Hum a tune to the flood sirens. Let the grinding of turbines be your anthem.