

The Great Silence

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The Great Silence
Introduction
Chapter 1: The Last Scroll
Chapter 2: The Silence
Chapter 3: Searching for Answers
Chapter 4: Lost Connections
Chapter 5: The Empty Office
Chapter 6: The Entertainment Void
Chapter 7: Knowledge Gap
Chapter 8: Chaos Ensues
Chapter 9: A New Beginning
Chapter 10: Echoes of the Past
Chapter 11: Bonds Reforged
Chapter 12: Legacy of the Fall
Chapter 13: The Curious Generation
Chapter 14: The Digital Ghosts
Chapter 15: The Second Choosing
Conclusion

Introduction

Before the Silence, there was the Roar. Neo-Seattle was a city that never slept because it was never dark. It was a canyon of glass and steel, eternally bathed in the *flickering, electric-blue* and *amethyst-purple* glow of holographic advertisements that danced, thirty stories tall, on the sides of skyscrapers. The *air* itself *thrummed*, a *constant, low-frequency bass note* of hover-traffic, maglev trains *hissing* on their tracks, and the *distant, synthesized chime* of public service announcements. The *scent* of the city was a *sharp, metallic*

tang of ozone from the charging ports, the *sweet, artificial cherry-blossom* scent pumped through the public ventilation systems, and the *constant, roasted-nut aroma* from street-side synthetic food printers. Life was a *seamless, high-fidelity* stream.

In their 40th-floor apartment, Arvind Singh lived in a world of *cool, white light* and *faint, electronic hums*. His workstation, a *gleaming black-and-silver* rig, was his altar. His fingers, *pale and smooth*, flew across a *silent, haptic* keyboard, the *only sound* a series of *soft, digital clicks* he'd programmed in for nostalgia. He was building *worlds* from *lines of glowing green and blue text*, his mind *submerged* in the *vast, silent ocean* of the global code network. His *air* was *filtered*, the *temperature perfectly* controlled, the *ambient light* shifting from a *bright, productive white* to a *warm, amber gold* as the day (as dictated by the clock, not the sun) progressed.

Vibha Jha lived in *color*. Her workspace was a *shrine to light*, her wrap-around monitors *blazing* with *impossible, vibrant hues* that *painted* her *face fuchsia, cyan, and digital gold*. She was a sculptor, but her *clay* was *light*, her *tools* a *glowing stylus* and a *tablet as black and reflective as a pool of oil*. She *pulled* inspiration from a *million* sources at once—a *Renaissance-era bronze* from a virtual museum, a *flickering, neon-pink color palette* from a Tokyo *nightclub* stream, the *fractal patterns* of a *deep-sea* creature. The *faint, ozonic scent* of her *rendering server mingled* with the *delicate, green-tea steam* rising from her *smart-mug*. Their dog, Pixel, *chased* a *small, holographic red dot* projected by a *ceiling-mounted* toy, *his paws skittering silently* on the *polished concrete* floor. Their lives were *perfectly curated, efficiently* managed, and *utterly* dependent on the *invisible, humming* river of *data* that *flowed through* the *walls, the air, and their very bodies*. They were *two*

gods in their small, glass sky-palace, never once imagining that the river could ever run dry.

Chapter 1: The Last Scroll

In the pulsating heart of Neo-Seattle, where the sky bled a perpetual *neon-fuchsia* and *electric-blue* from holographic advertisements, Arvind Singh lay in the *warm, amber glow* of his bedroom's "sleep" setting. The *cool, white light* of his phone cast *flickering, ghostly shadows* across his face as his thumb *tapped rhythmically* on the glass. One last scroll. Outside, the *incessant, drumming sound* of rain lashed against their 40th-floor apartment window, a *liquid percussion* against the *distant, bassy hum* of the city's hover-traffic. Arvind, a software engineer whose world was woven from threads of code, chuckled. The forum thread was a classic piece of late-night existentialism: "If the internet suddenly disappeared tomorrow and never came back... what's the first thing you'd truly miss?"

The comments flooded in, a cascade of *bright white text on a dark-mode background*. *Quick searches. Online friends. My job! Streaming music. How-to videos.* The *scent of ozone* from his charging phone mingled with the *lingering, spicy aroma of cardamom* from the chai they'd had after dinner. "I'd miss proving people wrong with a quick lookup," he muttered, the *low rumble* of his voice barely audible over the *faint, melodic murmur* of Hindi coming from Vibha's side of the bed. Vibha Jha, his girlfriend, a graphic designer with an eye for *vibrant, impossible colors*, was video-calling her family. Her face was illuminated by her own screen, her dark hair catching *blueish highlights*. On the screen, her parents' faces were a *warm, slightly pixelated* tableau, their voices *tinny and bright* with a *faint, fractional delay*. At their feet, their

dog, Pixel, a terrier mix named ironically for Vibha's profession, let out a *snuffling, whistling snore*, his paws twitching.

Arvind's apartment was a symphony of automated convenience. The digital art frames on the wall *silently, seamlessly* cycled through a *vivid gallery* of Vibha's art and family photos—a *sun-drenched yellow* beach giving way to a *moody, indigo* abstract piece. The air purifier *whirred* so quietly it was almost subconscious, filtering the *damp, metallic scent* of the city air. Even the fridge, a *gleaming silver monolith*, was programmed to suggest recipes, its internal *blue light* cataloging their contents. Arvind had always loved this seamlessness, the *clean, quiet efficiency* of a life optimized by data. The forum thread sparked a *soft, sleepy* debate. "I'd miss my playlists," Vibha murmured, pulling an earbud out. The *faint, synthesized beat* of a song *tinkled* in the air before she paused it. "No more discovering obscure bands at midnight. The *sound* of the world would just... stop." Arvind nodded, thinking of the *sharp, satisfying click* of a successful compile, the *glowing green* "OK" on his screen after fixing a bug. "I'd miss fixing things," he admitted. "Remember the water heater? That *hissing* sound? I fixed it with a five-minute video."

He swiped up to refresh the forum. The *blue* loading bar appeared at the top of his screen, pulsed, and then... froze. The screen became *unresponsive*, the *vibrant colors* of the forum locking into a *static, lifeless image*. "Just a glitch," he thought, the word a familiar comfort. He tapped the *cool glass*. Nothing. The *sound of the rain* outside seemed to swell, filling the *sudden, digital silence*. Beside him, Vibha's call *stuttered*. Her parents' faces *smearred into a mosaic of garish, digital green and purple*, their voices *twisting into a high-pitched, electronic squeal* that made Pixel jump up with a *startled yelp*. Then, *total silence*. Her screen went *black*, save for a

single, burning-red icon: "Call Failed." "That's weird," Vibha said, her voice *tight*. "The Wi-Fi must've dropped." Arvind force-restarted his phone. The *bright, optimistic logo* appeared, *gleaming white* against *black*. It booted up. He watched the signal bars at the top. One bar... then none. A *small, flat-grey 'X'* appeared. "No Service." A *cold knot* tightened in his stomach. "Hey Nexus," he called out to their smart speaker, a *sleek, grey fabric* cylinder on the dresser. "What's the weather?" The *blue ring* that usually pulsed to life remained *dark, dead*. The *silence* in the room was no longer cozy; it was *heavy, absolute, and cold*. The digital art frames were *frozen* on a single, mundane photo of a family picnic. The *warm, amber lights* in the room suddenly felt *artificial and brittle*. Arvind got up and looked out the window. The *neon-drenched rain* still fell, but the *flashing red and blue lights* of a distant emergency vehicle *painted the wall* of their building, a common sight, but tonight it felt *ominous*. Sleep came fitfully, a *grey, restless* state filled with dreams of *screaming static, colors bleeding* from frozen screens, and the *maddening, repetitive sound* of a buffering icon that would never load.

Chapter 2: The Silence

Dawn broke not with the *gentle, simulated sunrise* of their smart-lights, but with a *cold, flat, grey light* that seeped through the blinds, painting the room in *monochromatic, dusty shades*. The *silence* was the first alarm. No *faint chime* from Arvind's phone. No *whir* of the coffee maker's pre-scheduled brew. No *distant, muffled roar* of the morning's first hover-trains. It was a *thick, suffocating blanket* of quiet. Arvind woke to Vibha shaking him, her hand *cold* on his arm. "Arvind. It's still gone. Everything." Her voice was *sharp, dry* with a *metallic edge* of panic. "My call never