# Hard to Be a God Short Guide

## Hard to Be a God by Boris and Arkady Strugatsky

BOOKRAGS

# Contents

# Characters

Hard to Be a God is a great yarn, in many ways patterned after the historical adventure novel, and especially after its classic incarnation in the hands of Alexandre Dumas pere. Horse rides, sword duels, amorous conquests and court intrigues unfold against the backdrop of epoch-making revolutions and rebellions, and the requisite love story between Rumata and a local eighteen-yearold beauty ends, as it must, in her tragic death. Don Reba, the eminence grise at the Arkanar court, is openly compared to Cardinal Richelieu from The Three Musketeers, while the prodigiously eating, drinking and fighting Baron Pampa plays the role of Porthos to Rumata's D'Artagnan.

Rumata himself is like a god to the medieval courtiers. To their eyes this towering and super-strong nobleman appears invincible in battle, irresistible to ladies, and rich enough to indulge in any vice known in the realm. To us, he is an incurable romantic and a child of his enlightened era who despises the Arkanar tyrants and sycophants and yearns to get his hands dirty in the name of the loftiest ideals. "We are the gods here, Anton, but we have to be wiser than the local gods that men here have created after their own image," warns one of the two hundred and fifty progressors on the planet. But the gods on Arkanar bear a distinctly human curse. They die like mortals do, commit grievous errors of judgment, clash with each other over policy, entertain gnawing doubts about their mission, and in Rumata's case, fall helplessly in love.

Because the novel is preoccupied with the tides of social and class forces, many of its minor characters are caricatures drawn to exemplify the traits of their milieu. Thus Don Tameo, who reappears in the novel like a tiresome refrain, is not only a despicable little sycophant in his own right, but the epitome of Arkanar's aristocracy: corrupt, stupid and self-indulgent. The role of the champions of possible renaissance falls entirely on the shoulders of Earthmen, as they spirit away the persecuted artists and natural philosophers from the kingdom-wide pogrom. The king himself is in an almost burlesque fashion ridden with gout, and betrays incompetence that send the realm into the hands of bureaucratic despots like Don Reba. Only the larger-than-life Baron Pampa, whose generosity in the tradition of noblesse oblige is exceeded only by his hatred of the Grey Sturmoviks, is one of the few amiable and morally upright figures in the novel.

In a telling perspective on tyrants and autocrats, Reba himself is a nonentity, a mediocre grey individual whose only distinctive features are vaulting ambition and a penchant for intrigue. "Neither tall nor short, neither fat nor lean, his hair is not exactly full, but he's far from being bald.

When he moves, it's neither energetic nor lethargic. You'd forget his face in a minute; there are thousands who resemble him closely." He is, in short, a man in the crowd, driving home the message that evil need not boast pointed horns and cleft hooves.

Mass murderers and totalitarian despots do not brandish a stigma on their forehead like the biblical Cain. More often than not, they are mediocrities who await their chance at the trough of power to turn their megalomaniac fantasies into a full-scale theater of war,

with history as a backdrop and masses of innocent people as unwilling players. For although Reba is a Stalin who ruins the economy and agriculture of his country, and a Hitler who instigates a fascist putsch, he is also every corrupt ruler incarnate.

But the darkness that stifles the nation originates as much from the illiterate masses at the bottom of the medieval food chain.

Although it is natural to sympathize with victims of the feudal social pyramid, these "down-and-out seamen, bloated merchants, fishermen with sombre faces, slave traders, pimps, heavily made-up whores, drunken soldiers," fill Rumata with horror at their Hard to Be a Cod rank greed, prejudice and hatred. It is for not other reason that attempts to lead a mass revolution by several of Earth's mavericks had met with ignominious disaster.

What cripples attempts at elevating people out of their painful spot on the rack of history is that social progress is not a matter of deposing, or even disposing of individual oppressors or tyrants. It takes generations of patient education and liberal reform to turn mobs into enlightened citizens, a task that still eludes us on Earth at the door to the twenty first century.

# Social Concerns

In 1967 a nation-wide poll among Soviet readers rendered an unequivocal verdict.

Asked to rank the most popular science fiction works of all times and nations, the discerning Russian respondents placed the Strugatskys' books in the first, second, sixth and tenth places. The undisputed winner was the novel which may yet prove to be one of the enduring classics of twentiethcentury Russian literature: Hard to Be a God.

This moment of triumph solidified the Strugatskys' fame as cultural heroes and prophets, one that in a few short years had circulated far beyond the science fiction, or even the high-brow literary community.

Arkady, a wartime interpreter and translator of Japanese, and Boris, an astrophysicist, launched their joint literary career in the late 1950s, shortly after Ivan Yefremov's 1957 utopia, The Andromeda Nebula, paved the way for a revival of Soviet-era scientific fiction. With the genre enjoying an incomparably higher intellectual and literary status in the Soviet Union than in the West, their future histories and scientific parables soon became a byword among the country's intelligentsia. Read and revered by the scientists and literati alike, straddling the traditional divisions between popular and "serious" fiction, the brothers emerged during the turbulent 1960s as the spokesmen for their entire generation.

During the post-Khrushchev era they became famous not only as purveyors of science fiction but as astute socio-allegorical critics of their times, earning a precarious status with the publishing nomenklatura which for many years seesawed between grudging approval and an outright ban. The testimony from Soviet intellectuals leaves no doubt about the brothers' success in giving voice to their generation and its concerns. Writes Mikhail Lemkhin: "Hard to Be a God, Roadside Picnic, and One Billion Years Until the End of the World—are not only landmarks in my life, but representative of whole chunks of my life which were lived under the constellation of these tales. And I know for certain that I am not the only such reader."

By 1990 the translations of the Strugatskys have exceeded two hundred editions and reprints in more than twenty countries, an all-time record for the Russian practitioners of the genre. Andrei Tarkovsky's highly praised film, Stalker, based on Roadside Picnic, further cemented the national and international acclaim for the brothers' work, even though it has not immediately translated into commercial or literary-critical suc cess outside the former Soviet Union. How did science fiction, which all too often falls prone to escapist fantasy and space opera melodrama, become such a potent instrument in the hands of these two Russian writers? The answer may be found in an 1998 interview with Arkady, translated into English only in 1991, the year of his death. Defending the integrity and relevance of the genre, the writer hinted at the source of the brothers' literary and extraliterary success: "we think that science fiction is capable of most fully embodying the problems that worry us—and that trouble our citizens as well."

Given this unequivocal commitment to social relevance, it may be not amiss to ask how Hard to Be a God reflects specifically Russian, as well as more universal concerns. At the first glance it might be hard to credit the writers with much interest in the pressing social dilemmas of their time. The novel seems to indulge in historical escapism, placing an emissary from the Earth in the midst of an alien civilization and recording the entire gamut of reactions to his presence, from xenophobic suspicion to veneration of the type usually reserved for beings of a higher order, like the demiurges or deities of antiquity.

But in the process of his assimilation into the alien society, Rumata (whom we first meet as Anton, during his carefree boyhood on Earth) is a deus ex machina witness to the theocratic, feudal and fascist upheavals which tear the alien society apart. Dispatched by Earth's Institute of Empirical History to bolster the alien civilization's progress beyond the current feudal phase, the "progressor" Anton pretends for six years to be Don Rumata of Irukan, a legendarily wealthy patron of the sciences and the arts and swordsman par excellence.

His efforts to blend in are licensed by the fact that the society of Arkanar is alien in name only. In a narrative thought experiment of the type known in analytic philosophy as the Twin Earth scenario, the authors populate the alien planet with people, animals, and conditions hardly distinguishable from those of our own Middle Ages.

In symbolic contrast, the Strugatskys's image of terrestrial technology seems almost miraculous by today's standards. Subtle to the point of inconspicuousness, it creates the much prized effect of a "lived in" future in which such marvels are commonplace. One such gadget at Rumata's disposal is a Midas field synthesizer which appears to use cold fusion to turn sawdust into golden ducats. Although this portable miracle-maker clearly alludes to the Russian fairy tale tradition of a magic source of gold for the poor, other technologies indicated in the novel are far too advanced even for the imagination of fairy tales. The Earth is a thousand parsecs (i.e. over 400 lightyears) away from Arkanar, but Anton can be whisked between the two worlds without any time-relativistic effects. In addition to instant cosmic travel, malaria can be cured in less than two hours, alcohol poisoning in a few seconds, and everyone owns a degravitator belt, implying triumph not only over laws of physics but over socioeconomic problems on Earth.

This grand panorama of scientific progress goes hand in hand with hints about historical developments at home which, in line with Soviet state propaganda and the brothers' publishing reality, bear the hallmarks of a communist Utopia. The Earth is materially affluent and conflict-free, although not everyone is satisfied with this fountain of bliss, as is apparent from Anton's sarcastic reference to perennial grumblers. Hints about unification are subtle: during Rumata's pre-Arkanar training, his evaluators call him Anton and Tony, intimating diverse national and linguistic traditions, now fused in the common goal of aiding planets still rent by class and territorial rivalry. A mark of its time, this detail speaks volumes by itself. Published in 1964, Hard to Be a God came only two years after the Cuban missile crisis, during which Earth's nuclear superpowers tried to stare each other down from behind the triggers of doomsday arsenals.

But the Strugatskys make clear that common social problems are much more intricate and intractable than even the most advanced super-technologies. Arkanar citizenry wallows in obscurantism, hypocrisy and selfishness, and their society in fascism, murder and dictatorship, all of which are meant to ring a bell with the Russian readers. Marxism-Leninism, the "scientific" theory of dialectic materialism ossified into the sacred cow of Soviet socio-economic policy, was supposed to be the panacea to such psychological and sociological deformations. Every stage of historical development, no matter how bloody or cruel, was after all a milestone on the road to communist Utopia and material wish fulfillment. Ubiquitous propaganda—derided in Arkanar street names such as the Boulevard of Overwhelming Gratitude—was to brainwash people into believing themselves to be proud enactory of the greatest "law" of social progress. Yet history in the shape of millions of corpses and shattered illusions left the communist theory in tatters, and the peoples of the Soviet Union in agony.

The Strugatskys are at pains to expose the insidious nature of the historical determinism which was the cornerstone of the Soviet social propaganda. At its bottom lies a paradox, for if every stage of social evolution is predicted by Marxist-Leninism (or by its Arkanar equivalent, the basis theory of feudalism), then there is no reason to fight even the worst abuses of power since they are all part and parcel of progress.

"You don't stick to the rules of the game," young Pashka reproves his boyhood friend Anton in the Prologue. Not surprisingly, the adult Rumata will also chafe at the bit, at the end releasing his fury and lethal swordsmanship upon the killer monks of the Holy Order. The wait-and-see policy of his fellow progressors who still believe in the inviolability of the theory is not for him.

But a faulty social theory would never succeed in controlling a nation if not aided by an aggressive apparatus of state dictatorship. The words of father Kin, the torture master at the Tower of Joy, make a mockery of any such would-be theories when he extols the virtues of the New State in Arkanar. For the basic pillars of the new totalitarian state are simple: "blind belief in the infallibility of the law; total submission to the law; and finally, the unrelenting observation of everyone by all." Bloodshed and upheavals that ensue catch the terrestrial theoreticians and progressors by surprise, refuting their faith in inviolable laws of social progress. Only Anton, in brooding internal monologues that vivisect the value of assistance rendered to the alien planet, seems vaguely aware of the implications.

For, if the law falters in the face of reality, meddling in another civilization becomes an act of transgression and hubris on par with the military putsch of the monks of the Holy Order.

The implied symmetry between Arkanar and the Stalinist state means that the latter is never far behind the vision of a medieval kingdom on the brink of internal collapse.

Rumata's acerbic ruminations leave no doubt that the theocratic reign of bloody terror belies the "basis theory of feudalism, worked out in the quiet offices of our officials and in our laboratories." And if the parallels are so close—if what we learn of the "aliens"

makes them indistinguishable from what we know of our own history— the critique is clear. Hard to be a God is not about the historical vagaries of progressing from one socio-economic system to another, but about our own shortcomings as a civilization still more at home with the sword than the plow.

And the similarities never go away. The people of Arkanar and Irukan are exactly like us; their manners, speech, customs and psychology are readily identifiable as our own; their social structure and socioeconomic processes mimic our own past; and their literature and science boasts the same landmark discoveries we have made.

Drinking themselves stupid, escaping the responsibility of living in the present, even in their spiritual shortcomings they are painfully like us. Painfully, as even a cursory look around us reveals millions glued daily to the pages of the National Explorer, gloating over the orchestrated mayhem of prowrestling, consuming unprecedented quantities of drugs, and discovering Jesus among claims that Earth is but 4,000 years old.

The indoctrination at the Patriotic School of Arkanar is another barb aimed at the Soviet system, echoing Lenin who insisted (rightly so) that you can cast any mind into any mold you like, providing you start early enough. But once again the authors aim beyond the immediacy of their Soviet era. Lurking behind the lawless youth gangs is the shadow of Nazi Germany's Hitlerjugen who, graduated with equal dogmatism and nationalistic pride, were the future cadres of the SS, SD, and other branches of Hitler's apparatus of control. "And outside the window—stomp, stomp, stomp—come marching along the nailed boots of the sturdy, red-nosed fellows in their gray shirts." The gray of the Sturmoviks, the Storm Troops of the toxic Don Reba, signifies not only the shabby mediocrity of the middle class conformists, but alludes both to Mussolini's Brown Shirts —their color forever synonymous with fascism—and the crow-black uniforms of Hitler's Waffen-SS. Not content with drawing parallels, the authors collapse the underlying identity of Earth and the alien planet with a stark reference to Don Reba taking the path of "Captain Ernst Rohm of Nazi fame."

# Techniques

Sandwiched between the Prologue and Epilogue are ten chapters of adventure and historical romance, set in a land that is a skillful mixture of late-feudal Europe and medieval Japan. Yet in dramatic contrast to the swashbuckling epics of the Scott-Dumas tradition, the Strugatskys do not whitewash its dirty, hypocritical and conformist nature into another golden age of chivalry.

Their citizens and peasants are almost uniformly petty lowlifes whose civic concerns stop at their own selfish ends. Nor is the aristocracy any less contemptible, long ago having foregone aspirations to chivalric virtue in a scramble to get to the next hunk of roast, tankard of beer, nighttime frolic or duelling scrape.

In addition to the historical romance and science fiction, it is not difficult to detect in Hard to Be a God elements of another genre popular the world over. The plot is, after all, a variant on the infiltration motif, with Rumata, Don Kondor, Don Hug and others working diligently as spymasters in a planetary espionage operation. Not only do they conduct nonstop surveillance of their respective city-states, communicating image and sound via hi-tech comsets mounted in the diadems which adorn their headbands, but patiently establish elaborate networks of agents who report, inform and scour for intelligence. The book describes payoffs, secret rendezvous, dead drops and intrigues in the best manner of a John le Caree, including the wrenching moments when Rumata's associates pay the ultimate price of their loyalty.

As befits a sword-and-dagger plot, there are many scenes of intense physical action that range from short clashes to protracted life-and-death battles between the hero and hordes of Sturmoviks or black monks. But in a manner that could falter in the hands of lesser writers, the Strugatskys interlace these explosions of violent combat with drawn out socio-philosophical meditations by Rumata. He is not only the hero/protagonist and the focal point of all events but, in his internal monologues, their unremitting critic. The frequent ellipses which punctuate these introspective sections underscore the open and inconclusive nature of Anton's inner struggles. . . mirroring the at-best ambivalent results of Earth's intervention in Irukan, Arkanar, and other realms of the alien planet. . . .

In the quintessential Romantic tradition, Rumata displays the typical traits of a Byronic hero. He is a mysterious intruder with an unknown past, a sense of mission, a tragic love, a troubled conscience and a dark, menacing presence. Like Shelley he is also a hot-tempered revolutionary, whose heavy sarcasm and scorn finds targets in almost every aspect of the world around him. Finally he is a Keats-like worshipper of pure love, which he comes to associate with Kyra's devotion to him—"quiet and without any reservations"—in his disguise as Rumata, an incomprehensible envoy of apparently super-human powers.

Unfortunately for a work which must depend on the skill of its translator, the English text is sometimes faltering, and at times simply off the mark as when Kyra (in itself an unhappy transliteration from the original) is included in the roster of men.

Other times, the translation is identifiable as a direct rendition from the Russian, as when Pashka calls the other children "kids," a typically Russian colloquialism, where in English the exclamation would have been "guys." Occasionally the translation simply fails to convey the depth and range of allusion evoked by the original. For example, Rumata's meditation on the Hiccup Forest which brims with allusions to ageless elements of Slavic folklore, especially from the oral tradition of the fable and the fairy tale, evokes merely the impression of oddity and superstition.

In general the language of the novel mirrors the mood and tempo of a given scene. In combat sequences it is sharp and curt, while in the descriptive or reflexive passages it becomes slower, more meditative and often heavily ironic. Its expressiveness flows as much from the agonizing dilemmas faced by the protagonist, as from the emphasis achieved by a series of epithets, similes and metaphors. When Rumata despises Don Reba as "indescribably vile, a horrid criminal, an unscrupulous spider," he acts as a porte parole for the Strugatskys for whom literature is almost always an opportunity for a moral statement. At such nodes in the plot, the limited point of view of the protagonist yields to the omniscient— one is almost tempted to say godlike— viewpoint of a remote yet caring narrator, for whom the people of Arkanar are "not yet human beings in the current sense of the word, but rather preliminary stages, block of raw iron ore out of which the bloody centuries of history would eventually forge proud and free men."

# Themes

Although not unique to their works, or even to the Russian culture, several binary oppositions can be said to dominate the brothers' writings, among them: east versus west, individualism versus state, humanism versus Utopia, and past versus future. In the words of one Western critic, these themes "are given a particular slant by vicissitudes of Russia's twentieth-century history: the massive social upheaval of the revolution; Stalinism with its cultural amnesia and falsification of tradition; the crushing power of the State over any form of creativity, expressed in the institution of censorship with which the Strugatskys had to contend throughout their joint career; the sixties' "thaw"; and finally . . . the perestroika and the downfall of communism."

Hard to Be a God illustrates and evaluates several socio-historic theses, not all confined to the turbulent twentieth-century Russian history. It scoffs at the messianic impatience of revolutionaries who look for a quick fix to the enduring socio-evolutionary dilemmas of our times. Through the analogy between the foreign world and ours, the Strugatskys caution that taking on responsibility for an alien civilization is as thankless a task as shaping the history and social development of our own. In general, it is no accident that the cognitive and emotional impact of estrangement becomes especially apparent in the process of selfrevelation. The envoy from our planet, striving to understand the hatred and terror that rules the alien race, finds himself in the position of the eponymous hero of Edgar Allan Poe's story "William Wilson." In a moment of terrible epiphany, when Poe's protagonist tears the mask off the mysterious visitor, he sees only the contorted features that are intimately familiar, because they are his own.

Just like Earthmen penetrate the society of Arkanar and Irukan, their own society back home becomes infiltrated by the alien planet. When the children play cavalier Dons in the Prologue, their games reveal the extent to which Irukan, Arkanar, and other extraterrestrial names and places have become commonplace on Earth. To the extent that we have absorbed something of the culture of the distant civilization, it is clear that we are no islands in the sky, but planets so similar that we cannot but relate to each other across parsecs of space.

"It's possible to explain all their actions but hellishly difficult to prognosticate them."

With these words the Strugatskys hint at another overarching theme in their novel, that of ergodicity. An ergodic social system is one that has its own inner "inertia" which will dominate its behavior despite any amount of benign intervention from the outside. The authors are at pains to point out that, no matter how hard the progressors from Earth may strive to accelerate the evolution of the Arkanar society, these efforts are doomed to failure. Even the noblest intentions or the most advanced technologies cannot wrest an entire civilization away from its place and time in history.

But Hard to Be a God is not (or rather, not only) about grand theses viewed through the macroscope of history. Coming from a long line of Russian writers and intellectuals who had to suffer untold persecutions, the Strugatskys are always champions of the small, of

the individual, of the downtrodden. Their book is a howl of protest against projects of social amelioration so sweeping that next to them the fate (read: death) of thousands or even millions of individuals might pale into insignificance.

Just like Karel Capek insisted that "History is not made by great dreams but by the small needs of all honourable, somewhat dishonest and selfish little people, id est, of all people," the brothers propose that historical "isms" are too often an absolution of the sins committed in their name.

Scathingly, Rumata concludes that, when Don Reba's campaign of berserk terror has faded into the past, no one will remember the little people who fell victim to the battle-ax, while Reba himself will be footnoted only as a "minor adventurer during the epoch of consolidation of absolutism" in high school textbooks. Anaesthetized, unthreatening, politically correct annals of history . . . It is clear that the worlds of Rumata, the Strugatskys,' and ours have certainly a lot in common. Mocking textbook history in which generations of blood, sweat and tears are mere hiccups in a teleological fulfilment of capitalist-liberal dream, the authors ask through Anton's thoughts: "But are you familiar with the stench of smoldering corpses at stake?

. . . Have you ever seen a naked woman, her belly slip open, wallow in the dust?"

What does it take to get on the regime's black list? "It's enough to be intelligent and educated, to dare to have doubts, to say something out of the ordinary," rages Rumata in front of his pacifist colleagues.

Trained at the Institute that the progressor's time unit is the century, Rumata condemns his fellow agents of progress of practicing patience while "these beasts are attacking their fellow human beings every day, every single minute." Nor is such indiscriminate persecution of intellectuals an invention of science fiction. However different the sociopolitical programs of Lenin, Stalin, Mao or Pol Pot may have been, their pogroms were geared precisely towards the intelligentsia as the most likely source of underground opposition. Unfortunately, the most powerful intellect, armed with the most persuasive arguments, is defenseless in the face of a battle-ax.

The problem faced by the progressors is not new: in embryonic form it is encountered even by naturalists who unobtrusively study animals in their habitat in order to figure out ways to increase their chances of survival. Should the scientist kill poachers who decimate a herd of elephants? But the problem does not stop there. Should nations intervene in other nations' affairs in the name of justice and peace? While the record of both World Wars would indicate that they are justified in doing so, the selfserving invasions of the postwar Soviet satellites or the mayhem of Vietnam are eloquent testimony against it. It seems a tribute to the humanity and humaneness of the progressors that several of them fail to confirm to the official strategy, and renege by leading locals in armed uprisings, becoming martyrs of what they believe to be the right cause.

Social progress, however, is an infuriatingly slow process, full of retreats, false promises and betrayed causes. Why do societies inevitably take the path of least resistence? Why do tribal interests win over broader humanitarian concerns? Why do nations go to war? Bernard Malamud wrote once that behind his masterpiece, God's Grace, lurk only two basic questions: "Why does man treat himself so badly? What is the key to sane existence?" In its hard look at the regularities of socio-historical evolution, Hard to Be a God fashions an answer which denies the existence of any shortcuts to Utopia or escape into the past. We are, it seems, truly the children of our times, unable to escape the inertia of history, the grim conclusion which in the hands of the authors becomes a story of devastating emotional impact.

# Key Questions

In your discussion of this action-driven, yet deeply allegorical novel, you may wish to consider the following questions: 1. How do you evaluate Rumata's acts of insubordination against the policy of non-intervention in Arkanar?

2. How do the Prologue and Epilogue relate to the main story?

3. Is Don Reba evil incarnate or merely a typical product of his historical place and time?

4. In what ways are the social and material conditions on the future Earth better than those on the alien planet or on earth A.D. 2000?

5. In what respects does Baron Pampa stand out from the rank-and-file aristocrats on Arkanar?

6. What developments on the planet link it symbolically to the Nazi and Stalinist regimes?

7. Why can't Earth simply remove the tyrants and their militia and thus foster lasting peace and affluence?

8. What typical elements of science fiction, espionage story and a historical romance feature in the novel?

9. Why does every progressor find it so difficult to be a god?

# Literary Precedents

Tales of repression and political upheavals gone wrong, especially if set in the Russian context, cannot but bring to mind George Orwell's Animal Farm, where brutality and persecution are inflicted on the hapless subjects of the ruler of the farm. The influence of Orwell is also felt in subtle echoes of 1984 and his condemnation of doublespeak—the coercive use of language which obliterates its power to express disquiet or rebellion. Where Orwell's Big Brother & Co. turn the War Ministry into the Ministry of Peace, in Arkanar the royal Tower of torture and sadistic interrogation gets renamed the Tower of Joy.

Among the Strugatskys' works, Tale of the Troika and Ugly Swans are only two among other works that mercilessly target the worst excesses of rampant bureaucracy, Soviet or home made. Much like Hard to Be a God they are a sly mix of contemporary socio-political satire and allegory which transcends the immediacy of the Soviet "now and here" and appeal to readers from any country, language or political system. In their later works, the brothers often resort to a scenario reverse of Hard to Be a God: now it is the human civilization that becomes the object of occasional scrutiny of other races, whether the extraterrestrial Wanderers, or the super-race of Ludens from The waves Still the Wind, nurtured from our own midst.

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