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Dark World

The first time the raven flew out it did not last a day. It came back wet, bewildered and with his black feathers ruffled in an unsettling way. "The storms haven't receded yet, it appears. They had warned us about this, they said it might last for years to come." The old man often talked like that, as though we shared his memory of the old world, as though we had been there to witness the downfall of everything. But we hadn't, for we were born and grown in the new world, a very dark and confined one. As children we would often run up to him and inquire about the prophecies of the old world as though it was nothing but a mere fairytale, told to frighten children as they lay bundled up underneath the quilt.

First they said the old world would melt away into oblivion and the rising water would wash away everything that was left, including the people on it, for they had gone rotten. The old man had often talked about these people and how they deserved to die out. They were evil, greedy, selfish and far from being redeemed from their spoiled traits. We don't actually know anything about them, how they lived, what they looked like or what they've done to the old world, we only know that they had fought each other, waged endless wars against one another, while ignoring the real war that was against and for them all. The war against and for their world.

The second time the raven flew out did not last a day. It came back parched, weary and with his black feathers almost crusted together. "The sun is still ablaze and burning everything away. They had warned us about this, they said it might last for years to come", this time though the old man added, "but it will burn away the water, just as the prophecy had promised." The prophecies were the only thing that kept the old man going. That, and the ravens he would send out to fly, for one day the old world will be washed away for a new one to emerge.

Old and new, new and old, the same mantra every day. But nothing about why and what happened, where and how things came to be. Nothing about where we are, where we are headed and where we will stay. "You are the new world", the old man would tell us, "you will be the ones to bring back peace, harmony and life. You, and whatever animals we have left." By that he was referring to the livestock we were keeping one deck below us. "Remember, the animals are free of guilt. It is us humans to blame for the war that came upon us. The war against and for the old world."

The third time the raven flew out it did not last a day. And by that I don't mean it came back, by that I mean it *did not last* a day. It was gone. Either swallowed by the water or scorched by the sun. As the old man had always said, "there is an enemy below and an enemy above us and none want to keep us alive". When the news of the fallen craven had reached the old man he grew somber: "Send another" "But that was the last one we had of that species. They're all gone now, they're—what's that word?" "-extinct", the old man replied in a tone that sounded like this wasn't the first time someone had told him this. "Which other winged creatures do we still have left?" "Three chickens, a penguin and one tiny dove", the boy he was talking to seemed to be very proud and confident of the delivery of his message, after all we still had five other winged creatures to send out to fly, plenty of spares. But the old man's expression said something else. It said something it had always been saying for as long as we could remember, for as long as we have been living inside the ark.

Years had gone by and no other creature was sent out to fly. Nobody knew what was going on outside, whether the sun had been blown out like a candle or whether the water had evaporated into the sky. The world grew darker and darker, each time proving to us that it was indeed possible to grow even darker. The animals, the last non-human species, were growing weary and silent. Then one day the old man fetched the now rather old-looking dove and sent it out to fly. The dove lasted a day. And then another. And then another. On the fourth day it returned and in its mouth was something shiny, transparent and reflective in the sunlight. "What is it?" we breathed and inched closer for inspection. The old man's wrinkled face lit up with joy and a hint of nostalgia: "Something from the old world". He ran his leathery old fingers over the item's smooth surface and sighed. "The hour of enlightenment has come, it is time to prepare you for this new world you are about to venture on", the old man held the shiny piece up and began yet again another one of his encrypted tales in a proclaiming manner: "This...is *plastic*."