

# Today's Environmental Issues - A Short Story

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## Several decades ago

APOCALYPSE: Will the polar ice melt cause the world to become water world? Will the remaking of the Hulk ship be able to save humanity? Are there enough hulk ships to save the whole population or can only the rich afford them?... The news keeps flashing on the television screens of the emptied houses which were once inhabited by the present residents of the Hulk. As per the estimated number of ships which were supposed to bear the drastic geographical changes, the Hulk ships have not been able to meet that demand. There are continents under the water and the population above them, either saved by hulks or few by luck, and others as floating dead bodies.

## Present day

I am walking in my backyard barefoot, feeling the morning dew on my feet. The crisp morning air along with the smell of the freshly baked bread hits my face, "Mike?" I hear my mother call out my name but it sounds unfamiliar; "Mike!" and I jolt awake to the reality. The familiar sound of the waves crashing against the

Hulk ship on which we live fills my ears. My eyes focus on the familiar face of my sister who is still calling me and chattering about how I should be going out to help Bob, Bob is the guy who acts as a makeshift for both, a parental figure as well as a friend. "Geez Blake! Stop babbling, I am going!" and with that I open the window of our small room which we share with two more people. Outside I see a view which I like, there is a clear sky today and one can see all the Hulks that form our community. I have not gone beyond these hulks throughout my life and I sometimes find myself wondering what will the life outside this community be like? Is there land out there somewhere like the rumors have claimed or are they just rumors? But I don't let myself get carried away in these fantasies and let my hopes go high, I just remind myself that it is the same blue sky and blue water everywhere. Bob is stooped over his stove; he is also one of the cooks of our Hulk. Looking at the gruel, I ask him, "low on supplies?"

"As always" and we both share a frown. "Heard those Raiders killed five more Mariners yesterday"

“Oh! been hearing a lot of these lately. How do they think they will survive after all the Mariners are dead?”

“You have never seen a Mariner right? One has come to trade soil, seeds and some other things which she has got from another community. Come, if you are lucky today, maybe you will get to see her”.

He keeps on describing about his experience when he saw one; how he couldn't stop staring at the gills he had just below where his neck ended. As we enter the foyer, where most of our trade is done, Bob nudges me and points to a girl who has green bright shining eyes which resembles emeralds and I half expected her to have scales instead of the human skin but she looks just like us except for the gills, the webbed fingers and toes. She is trading with one of the many traders present in the foyer. Suddenly the trader exclaims at her “this is not a fair trade!”, for which she calmly responds, a sign of an experienced trader, “it is a fair trade, this was extracted from the northern part of the Asian continent under the sea!” even before she finished, another accusation was hurled at her “just because you are the only ones who can go under the sea, don't try to fool us!” The whole foyer turns to chaos accusing the Mariners. She slams something on the table and turns on her heels to walk away. Someone pulls her and tries to slam her against the table but she is quick to react and gets away from them in time to dive into the ocean but, just before she dived in, I noticed something flashy falling from her onto the ship and the way people started gossiping about the turnout of the whole event, I think nobody noticed it. I go over there to find a locket with something carved into it. As I stare at it for a longer time, I understand what is written on it, 'MIKE'. I turn it back, and there is one on the back as well, 'BLAKE'. But just because it has got our names carved on it doesn't mean it has got anything to do with us, right? And Mike or Blake are really common names and most importantly, I am not a Mariner but a human, so it simply does not have any connection to either me or Blake. I quickly put away the

locket inside the pocket of my pants and hurry back to my room. "So, you found this intricate locket of waves crashing against a lone mountain and sun with your names on it, dropped by the Mariner when she was diving?" asked Bob.

"Eye that is an eye and not a lone mountain and sun, waves crashing against an eye and yes that is exactly what I am saying." Bob stared at me for a moment longer and then his expression changed as if some realization has struck him. Blake who was standing in front of the mirror examining her neck, as if searching for gills there, opened her mouth to say something but became quiet when she saw Bob's expression.

Bob continued saying, "There was a war twenty one years back between four communities, including ours, against a single community which is said to be very powerful and rich, it is called the community of Elentiya, I have heard that it is symbolized with waves crashing against an eye, that community does not believe in the differences between Mariners and humans, there Mariners and humans live in harmony and peace but, as the other communities were not ready to accept the Mariners, they treated them inhumanely. The people of Elentiya stopped trading with other communities as they were self sufficient with the number of Mariners at their side, which led to the war. As I was among the few who were excluded from the war but I saw the people who returned after the war and the number of people who returned were less than half the number of people who went and most of them were injured badly. They said that Elentiya won the war but with a lot of losses. Two days after the war ended, I was summoned to the captain and was awarded with a newborn and a child with the rarest of the eye colours any human could have, green specked with gold, and was given the option of tossing you both in the water or raise you".

A week passed by after that incident with the Mariner. It was a usual day at the hulk. Mike and Blake were practicing sword play, as they usually did in the evenings. There was a sudden shrieking

sound from few levels below them. They paused their practice and went down in search of the cause of that sound. All the people had halted mid work to gape at an army of Mariners marching towards them on the deck of the hulk. In the center of them was the girl with the bright green eyes, armed to tooth, she looked directly at him and asked, "where is your community's captain, where is the captain of Oakhallow?"

"Scarlet, commander of the army of Elentiya, to what do I owe the pleasure of your company?" asked the captain of Oakhallow mockingly.

She bared her teeth and said, "your people took something from us which is ours." Mike's hand unconsciously went to the pocket of his pants where he had hid the locket.

"If you mean that pathetic locket that one of my poor boy has taken, then he will give it back to you, won't you, Mike?"

With that, the piercing gaze of the captain slid to Mike. Mike moved from his spot towards Scarlet, sword still out in one hand from practice. Nobody commented when his sister joined him and walked along with him. Somebody gasped and whispered behind Scarlet and that was enough to draw Mike's attention towards that person. A set of green eyes flecked with gold stared back at him and smiled. "Scarlet cleared her throat and said, "we came to take back what you took from us twenty one years back!". The girl who was smiling at him moved faster than the eyes could follow and threw Mike out of the hulk followed by Blake. Before he could swim back to the hulk, he was hauled up from water on a smaller ship and when he looked back at the hulk, there was only the shining metal hitting against each other and the sound of clashing swords.

"What do you want from us?", Blake asked a bearded man standing guard near them.

"That is not my place to tell but, I assure you that we mean you no harm". Blake raised an eyebrow and urged him to continue.

"After you talk to Stella, If you do not want to come with us and stay in this hellhole of a place called Oakhallow, we will not stop you, though we will not be so happy about it". Blake grinned at him and he grinned right back.

"Who is Stella?", Blake asked.

"The girl with the same eyes as you both". At the onset of dusk, the battle subsided. Stella came to a stop in front of the table where Mike and Blake were seated and took a seat at the table while the rest of the people around them remained standing and gaurding. The sentries bowed to her and she gave them a slight nod of her head.

"So you are the princess and the future heir of Elentiya?" Mike asked as a way of greeting.

"A princess yes, but not the heir to the throne. You see I have an elder brother for that".

"We have been taught there is only one sole heir to the throne of Elentiya, were we given wrong schooling?"

"No, not at all, that's the truth, at least that is what everyone believed". At the look of confusion on both of their faces, the princess added with a grin, "welcome home, elder brother and sister!"

