

ONDA

Earth roars.

Lightning shoots between angry, blackened storm clouds and wide, rolling waves surge towards me from every direction. Furious gusts of wind and rain, sharp as needles, batter me back and forth as the sea writhes under my feet.

A crash of thunder rumbles deep through my body; I reach my hands out, groping blindly in the darkness for something to cling onto, to steady myself. I battle my way across the ship and stumble erratically into the cabin, the flimsy wooden door thrashing behind me, slamming repeatedly in the gale. I quickly spin around and wrestle it closed, fastening it shut, but the whole cabin continues to shake violently. I can do nothing but curl up on the cold, hard floorboards and there I will stay, until the storm subsides. The wind shrieks and wails around me as if searching for a way inside, and the cabin shudders in fear.

I press my hands over my ears and clamp my eyes shut.

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I gaze across the horizon to where the bleak and utterly empty sky meets the impenetrably blue, softly undulating mass of the ocean. Long, unkempt hair whips around my face, a long and tattered coat billows behind me, and gusts of stinging sea-spray are hurled into my eyes in the constant force of the morning breeze. I remain unblinking, my stare fixated on the distance.

A spark of brilliant light breaks the blurred line of the horizon, bathing me, grizzled and unflinching, and the small, dilapidated boat upon which I stand, in glorious beams of intense sunlight. Slowly turning my head over my shoulder, I see my shadow stretching seemingly infinitely across the unending, pulsating seawater. The shining orb in the sky gradually rises, turning its gaze downwards towards the ocean and sending sparkling reflections over my craft and I. Gazing around me, I notice the curvature of the Earth under the now azure, cloudless sky.

I am alone, in every sense of the word, save for the warming sunlight on my skin and the calming to-and-fro motion of the sea which rocks my boat back and forth. But though the Sun warms my skin, a paralysing coldness pervades my being.

It wasn't always like this. My eyelids flicker before drifting to a close, and I withdraw from this cold reality which surrounds me into the past: my sanctuary.

I used to have a name. I remember the shape formed by the lips of those around me as this elusive expression escaped in their breath: Onda... My name was Onda.

How long has it been since I heard that, or any word at all? Time, the tyrant which once ruled over my existence, has lost all meaning, and the only sign which alerts me to its passing is the cycle between day and night. So many times has the Sun passed over my ship; I lost count a long time ago. The absence of events drags each day and night on for what seems like an age, yet also blurs them together into one slurred and indistinguishable stretch of time.

It seems only yesterday that the great empire of humanity was still in place, assuming dominion over nature. Only yesterday that billions of lives were washed away by the raging seas, like the seeds of a dandelion in the wind. Only yesterday that nature struck back.

I remember the panicked tones of my land's leaders, broadcast all across the globe, and I remember the day their promises collapsed. The ocean was an enraged beast, exacting its revenge upon those who had wronged it.

It seems I am the only one it is content to spare, alone on my rusted and weathered boat. I am, for all I know, the last remaining land-roaming creature of this Earth.

As the Sun drifts higher in the skystill facing me, observing, like some cruel greater intelligencel finally break free of my stuated pose and wander into the ship's cabin.

I try to ignore the dwindling water and food supplies as I stride past them. Rain has not fallen in what seems like many weeks, and fishing is becoming increasingly difficult with what little deteriorating equipment I still have. The ocean throws fits of fury and storms thunder around me. How can this ramshackle boat continue to withstand the Earth's wrathful bellows?

I shake my head slightly, trying to clear the haze of despondency that has settled around it. I have to stay strong.

Approaching the ancient radio, I cannot help but raise my hopes up once again. I cannot afford to keep the device on for long with my waning power supply; it is my only hope of contacting any other survivors who may be scattered across the scarred and

flooded globe. Every day I call out to beyond the horizon, informing anyone who might be listening of my location and predicament. Location has, like time, lost meaning in this uniformly blue world, and I can only determine it using the stars. It seems they have become my only allies in this world of endless ocean where the Earth has turned against me, though they reveal themselves only in the absence of the Sun's fiery, tyrannical glare. After finishing my outcry, I sit and listen for any response. My heart pounds inside my throat, my hands begin to quiver and my mind races furiously in apprehension. This could be it...

Silence.

Silence is perhaps the only thing that has been created, rather than destroyed. For the short time that humanity had after discovering the truth, it finally stopped the warring and feuding that had plagued it for so many millennia. Bickering and squabbling had erupted at first, with authority figures and ordinary people alike desperate to lay the blame on someone other than themselves. But as their time ran out and the sea began to slowly swallow up the only world they had ever known, they were united. United in desperation, denial and utmost terror. Such feelings are still with me now, the only remainder of a once great yet deluded empire of people.

The radio remains silent, and my hopes are crushed yet again. I wander out of the cabin, despondent, without even bothering to turn the device off.

The Sun is at its highest point, glaring down at me with all its silent rage. I am being slowly worn away; my determination, my hope, and I fear my sanity, too. My eyes return to the ocean, but I see nothing. My mind is once again in turmoil, and my consciousness has receded.

A distant splash rouses me, and my eyes snap into focus. Many miles away, I watch as the colossal tail of a mighty whale drifts through the air, then slams down into the depths. If only I could join her, to find not death and despair in the seas, but sanctity and life. If only: two words which have haunted me to the core of my being since I set off.

Perhaps I am wrong. Sparks fly through my head; perhaps I can find respite in the seas. I stand near the edge of my ship a lone island in a world engulfed by waves and stare downwards into the impenetrable depths. Why go on? I am merely prolonging my own suffering; the human race is dead. I am merely the husk of its last member, hollowed out by the Sun and the seas, the wind and the rain: Mother Earth's weapons of war.

I want no, need a way out of this futile, meaningless existence. It must not continue. I know what I have to do.

I climb to the bow of the ship and stare down into the sea. It suddenly seems to flare into life, fiercely rippling, waves striving to reach me as if in a primordial hunger. The winds pick up, endeavouring to throw me off balance and break my grip on the ropes around me, to tip me into the abyss below. The Sun beats down on me harder than ever, forcing my weary eyes into a pained squint. Beads of sweat trickle down my face. The cool ocean seems increasingly inviting. I am so very, very tired...

I slowly lean further forwards. The only lifeline tethering me to this torturous reality is the old, weathered rope wrapped under my fingers. My lips are agape, my eyes glazed over and gradually flickering shut. I make one final attempt to gather the fragments of my broken mind together, and steel myself. My fingers begin to slip away; I lift a foot...

Then a single crackling noise sounds out across the silence and battles through my raging mind; I collapse backwards, sobbing, overcome with floods of relief. It is the single most beautiful sound I have ever heard.

"Hello?"