TARA'S SUCCESSION

ISSUE TWO

THE PECKING ORDER

FEATURING LAGOON

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LAGOON

A STORY BY TARA ANN-MARIE ALLEN CYON FLEX

LAGOON WAS A PLACE SURROUNDED BY WATER. BUT INSIDE LAGOON, THERE WAS NONE. THERE WERE NO RIVERS, FOUNTAINS, CHANNELS OR LAKES. THE WATER STAYED WHERE LAGOON ENDED. RAVEN HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED WATER. IF PEOPLE NEEDED TO TAKE A WASH, THEY WENT TO THE CLEANING POINT. A LIGHT BEAM PASSED OVER THEIR BODY. AND THEY WERE CLEAN.

BEFORE THE BALL SPOKE, RAVEN WAS AWAKE. THE LAST STAR WAS STILL VISIBLE THROUGH THE WINDOW. RAVEN STAYED IN BED. THE BALL HAD NOT SPOKEN YET. NOTHING HAD BEEN ASSIGNED. OUTSIDE, DOORS OPENED. PEOPLE REGENERATED INTO CONSCIOUSNESS. ROUTES WAITED. LAGOON HAD SIGNS FOR EVERYTHING IT CONSIDERED IMPORTANT. THERE WAS NO SIGN ON THE SKY. RAVEN LIKED THE SKY.

THE BALL SPOKE. GO TO POINT TWELVE. SHE OPENED HER EYES. THE BUNKHOUSE WAS STILL DARK. IT HAD ONCE BEEN A FABRIC FACTORY. SOMEONE COUGHED SEVERAL BUNKS AWAY. SOMETHING METAL FELL OVER NEAR THE FAR WALL AND WAS LEFT THERE. RAVEN SAT UP. THE NECK-BALL HUNG FROM THE BEDPOST. THE HAND-BALL WAS UNDERNEATH THE BUNK BESIDE THREE PIECES OF COPPER, A BENT STRIP OF ALUMINIUM AND SOMETHING FROM THE TIP THAT MIGHT ONCE HAVE BEEN USEFUL. RAVEN PICKED UP THE HAND-BALL. PEOPLE CARRIED THEM. THAT WAS WHAT THEY WERE FOR. GO TO POINT TWELVE. I HEARD YOU. THE BALL DID NOT ANSWER. IT NEVER DID.

THE CLEANING POINT WAS CROWDED. EVERYBODY LOOKED AT THE BALL IN THEIR HAND. OCCASIONALLY SOMEBODY LOOKED UP. THEY WOULD SEE ANOTHER PERSON LOOKING BACK AT THEM. BOTH OF THEM WOULD LOOK SLIGHTLY AFRAID. THEN THEY WOULD LOOK BACK AT THEIR BALLS. NOBODY HAD DONE ANYTHING WRONG. IT JUST FELT AS THOUGH SOMEBODY HAD. PEOPLE STOOD TOO CLOSE TOGETHER AT THE CLEANING POINT. ON THE STREET IT WAS DIFFERENT. PEOPLE LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER THERE. THEY JUST NEVER LOOKED KINDLY.

PEOPLE DID NOT SPEAK MUCH IN LAGOON. THERE WAS YES. THERE WAS NO. MOST OF THE TIME THERE WAS NEITHER. THE BALLS HEARD EVERY WORD. TOO MUCH SPEECH CAUSED TROUBLE. PLEASE REQUIRED SOMEBODY TO CARE WHAT YOU WANTED. THANK YOU REQUIRED THEM TO NOTICE WHAT YOU HAD DONE. BOTH HAD BECOME INEFFICIENT. IF SOMEBODY NEEDED YOU TO MOVE, THEY MOVED YOU. SOMETIMES THE THING IN THE WAY WAS A PERSON. NOBODY SAID SORRY.

OTHER LANGUAGES WERE FORBIDDEN. SOME PEOPLE SPOKE IN DIALECTS. THE WORDS SOUNDED DIFFERENT. THE RHYTHM WAS DIFFERENT. MOST OF WHAT THEY SAID STILL MEANT YES OR NO. YES, BUT DIFFERENTLY. NO, BUT MORE SLOWLY.

RAVEN HAD ONCE ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS. IT MADE HER LIFE WORSE. EVENTUALLY SHE STOPPED. LIVING BESIDE THE TIP HELPED. NOBODY WENT THERE UNLESS THEY WERE THROWING SOMETHING AWAY. SOME OF THE METAL STILL WORKED. SOME COULD BE USED FOR SOMETHING ELSE. RAVEN TOOK IT APART. THE METAL DID NOT SPEAK.

RAVEN KNEW SHE DID NOT BELONG. PEOPLE LOOKED AT HER. SHE LOOKED BACK. THAT WAS ENOUGH. OTHER PEOPLE HAD GROUPS. MOST OF THEM WERE PRETENDING. RAVEN DID NOT PRETEND WELL.

THERE WERE OLD ORDERS ALL OVER LAGOON. SOME HAD BEEN SCRATCHED OUT. SOMETIMES SOMEBODY STOPPED, SCRATCHED THROUGH ONE AND CONTINUED WALKING. IF RAVEN ASKED WHY, NOBODY ANSWERED. SHE STOPPED ASKING.

THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF POINTS IN LAGOON. SOME WERE CIRCLES PAINTED ON THE GROUND. SOME WERE METAL PLATES. RAVEN WENT WHERE THE BALL SENT HER. AT EACH POINT, A LIGHT PASSED OVER HER. REGISTERED. THEN ANOTHER INSTRUCTION. AT POINT TWELVE, THE BALL SENT HER TO POINT FOUR. AT POINT FOUR, IT SENT HER BACK TO POINT TWELVE. THERE WERE MORE PEOPLE IN THE QUEUE WHEN SHE RETURNED. THIS WAS ANNOYING. IT WAS NOT STRANGE.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, RAVEN REACHED HER FINAL POINT. REGISTERED. DAILY ROUTE COMPLETE. GO TO FOOD ALLOCATION POINT. FOOD WAS WAITING. SHE TOOK IT HOME. THE DAY HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL. NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.

AFTER EATING, RAVEN WENT THROUGH THE NEWEST PILE AT THE TIP. SHE FOUND A PIECE OF BRASS, HALF A HINGE AND A SMALL METAL DISC WITH SIX HOLES. THE DISC WAS EXCELLENT. RAVEN DID NOT KNOW WHAT IT HAD BEEN. THAT WAS NO LONGER ITS PROBLEM. SHE PUT IT UNDER THE BUNK WITH THE OTHERS. THEN SHE REGENERATED.

THE TRANSFER POINT

ON THE MORNING RAVEN WAS SENT TO THE TRANSFER POINT, SHE DID NOT KNOW ANYTHING WAS DIFFERENT. GO TO POINT THREE. REGISTERED. GO TO POINT TWENTY-TWO. REGISTERED. GO TO POINT ELEVEN. REGISTERED. GO TO LAGOON TRANSFER POINT. RAVEN WENT. SHE HAD NEVER BEEN ASSIGNED THERE BEFORE. THAT WAS NOT UNUSUAL EITHER. THERE WERE POINTS SHE HAD NEVER VISITED. LAGOON WAS LARGE. THE TRANSFER POINT WAS AT THE EDGE OF LAGOON. BEYOND IT WAS WATER. THE TRANSFER POINT HAD NO QUEUE. RAVEN STOOD ON THE MARKED PLACE. NOTHING HAPPENED. SHE WAITED. STILL NOTHING. THEN SHE NOTICED THE SHAPE. IT WAS SET INTO A METAL SURFACE BESIDE THE POINT. A HAND. IN THE HAND, A BALL. RAVEN LOOKED AT HER OWN HAND. THEN AT THE HAND-BALL SHE HAD BEEN CARRYING FOR AS LONG AS SHE COULD REMEMBER. NOBODY HAD EVER TOLD HER WHAT IT WAS FOR. MOSTLY IT WAS SOMETHING TO CARRY. SHE PLACED HER HAND, WITH THE BALL IN IT, INTO THE SHAPE. CLACK. SOMETHING MOVED BENEATH HER PALM. KRRK. THE WATER SHIFTED. A BOAT WOKE. RAVEN LOOKED AT IT. THE BALL SAID: BOARD. SO RAVEN BOARDED. THERE WAS A PLACE BESIDE THE SEAT SHAPED FOR THE HAND AND BALL AGAIN. SHE PUT HER HAND THERE. THE BOAT MOVED. RAVEN SAT DOWN. LAGOON BECAME SMALLER BEHIND HER. THE BALL GAVE NO NEXT POINT. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RAVEN'S LIFE, SHE WAS TRAVELLING SOMEWHERE WITHOUT KNOWING WHERE SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO STAND WHEN SHE ARRIVED. SHE WAITED. THAT PART SHE KNEW HOW TO DO.

THE CROSSING

THE BOAT GLIDED THROUGH THE WATER AT GREAT SPEED. RAVEN LET HER FREE ARM HANG OVER THE SIDE. COLD WATER PASSED BETWEEN HER FINGERS. SHE TREMBLED. SHE PULLED HER HAND BACK. THEN PUT IT IN AGAIN. THE WATER WAS CHOPPY. SHE COULD FEEL IT ALL THE WAY UP TO HER ELBOW. RAVEN LIKED THE FEELING. WATER SPLASHED HER FACE. SHE SPLASHED IT BACK. SHE CUPPED HER HAND AND BROUGHT THE WATER TO HER MOUTH. RAVEN DRANK. IT WAS FRESH WATER. SHE HAD NOT KNOWN THAT BEFORE TRYING IT. THE WATER WAS COLD, WITH A FAINT MINERAL TASTE. THEN CAME AN AFTERTASTE OF SALT. THAT WAS UNUSUAL.

RAVEN DECIDED TO PUT A FOOT IN AS WELL. NOW HALF OF HER BODY WAS HANGING OVER THE SIDE OF THE BOAT. THIS WAS NOT A GOOD IDEA. SHE PULLED HER FREE ARM BACK INTO THE BOAT. THEN SHE LET BOTH FEET CATCH THE COLD WATER INSTEAD. THE BOAT KEPT MOVING.

THE JOURNEY TOOK A LONG TIME. THERE WAS WATER. THEN MORE WATER. RAVEN SLEPT. WHEN SHE WOKE THERE WAS STILL WATER. SHE HAD NOT COMPLETED A ROUTE, SO SHE HAD NO FOOD. EVENTUALLY LAND APPEARED. THERE WAS A LARGE UNFINISHED BUILDING. IT WAS MARKED 509-A. THE BOAT STOPPED. THE BALL REMAINED QUIET. RAVEN STEPPED ONTO LAND. NOTHING TOLD HER WHERE TO GO. RAVEN WAITED. NOTHING HAPPENED. THIS WAS BADLY ORGANISED. RAVEN WALKED.

WATER

INSIDE 509-A, THE PLACE WAS CLEAN. A FLAT PIECE OF STEEL MOVED ALONG THE WALL WITH A LINE OF LIGHT. RAVEN FOLLOWED IT BECAUSE IT WAS MOVING. IT STOPPED. PROTOCOL ASKED: WHAT DO YOU NEED? RAVEN LOOKED BEHIND HER. THERE WAS NOBODY THERE. SHE LOOKED BACK AT THE STEEL. LAGOON. THE STEEL MOVED. RAVEN FOLLOWED.

A SECTION OF WALL OPENED. A STEEL CUP APPEARED. THERE WAS LIQUID INSIDE. RAVEN LOOKED INTO IT. LAGOON. DO YOU NEED WATER? SHE LOOKED AT THE STEEL. THEN BACK INTO THE CUP. WATER? DO YOU WANT WATER? YES. NOTHING HAPPENED. CAN I TAKE IT? NO ANSWER. IS IT MINE? NO ANSWER. AM I ALLOWED? NO ANSWER. RAVEN PICKED UP THE CUP. NOTHING STOPPED HER. SHE DRANK. SHE FELT THE SAME COLDNESS IN HER MOUTH. SHE LOOKED INTO THE CUP AGAIN. WATER.

AFTERWARD, PROTOCOL ASKED: DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE? CONTINUE WHAT? NO ANSWER. DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE? RAVEN WAITED FOR THE QUESTION TO BECOME MORE USEFUL. IT DID NOT. YES. A DOOR OPENED. RAVEN STARED AT IT. THEN WENT THROUGH.

AFTER A WHILE, RAVEN RUBBED THE BACK OF HER NECK. THEN HER SHOULDER. OOH. SHE SMELLED HER HAND. I FEEL STICKY. RAVEN WENT LOOKING. A SMALL ROOM CONTAINED SOMETHING FIXED HIGH ON THE WALL. RAVEN STOOD UNDERNEATH IT. WATER CAME OUT IMMEDIATELY. RAVEN JUMPED BACKWARDS. THEN STARED. WATER.

SHE HAD FELT WATER BEFORE. COLD WATER MOVING PAST THE BOAT. WATER BETWEEN HER FINGERS. WATER CATCHING HER FEET. THIS WAS A DIFFERENT SENSATION. RAVEN PUT ONE HAND UNDERNEATH. SHE FELT THE HEAT. SHE WINCED. THE FLOW OF WATER ADJUSTED. SHE PUT HER HAND BACK. IT FELT MORE COMFORTABLE. THEN SHE PUT HER OTHER HAND UNDERNEATH. THEN HER HEAD. THEN RAVEN STEPPED UNDERNEATH IT. SHE HAD NOT TAKEN HER CLOTHES OFF. AT THE CLEANING POINT, THE LIGHT BEAM CLEANED EVERYONE WITH THEIR CLOTHES ON. SHE HAD EXPECTED THE SAME THING HERE. NOW HER CLOTHES WERE DRENCHED. THE FABRIC CLUNG TO HER SHOULDERS AND BACK. HER SLEEVES WERE HEAVY. WHEN SHE LIFTED AN ARM, WATER RAN FROM THE CUFF. SHE PULLED THE FABRIC AWAY FROM HER SKIN. IT STUCK AGAIN. THE WATER GATHERED SPEED OVER HER HEAD. SHE FELT IT LIKE A WAVE. IT SPLASHED HER. SHE SPLASHED THE SHOWER BACK.

FOR A WHILE, SHE DID NOTHING. WARM WATER RAN OVER HER FACE, SHOULDERS AND BACK. NOTHING SCANNED HER. NOTHING ANNOUNCED THAT CLEANING WAS COMPLETE. THE WATER SIMPLY KEPT FALLING. RAVEN STAYED RIGHT THERE.

THE PECKING ORDER

WHO GETS SENT UP THE LADDER, WHO GETS SENT DOWN, AND WHO NEVER REACHES THE LADDER?

WHO DECIDED THAT ONE PERSON HAD MORE WORTH THAN ANOTHER?

DOES SOMEONE'S GENDER, RACE, WEALTH OR POSITION IN SOCIETY MAKE THEM SUPERIOR?

PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES.

BUT RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT MEAN SUPERIORITY.

AUTHORITY DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MAKE SOMEBODY RIGHT.

PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE OPPRESSION CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE VERY SAME OPPRESSION TOWARDS OTHERS.

THAT IS ONE OF THE GREAT CONTRADICTIONS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR.

WE KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, YET WE CONTINUE THE CYCLE.

WHY?



THE WORLD WE INHERIT

NOBODY IS BORN UNDERSTANDING THE PECKING ORDER.

WE LEARN ABOUT IT.

WHO'S IMPORTANT. WHO'S NOT. WHO HAS POWER.

WHO'S EXPECTED TO OBEY.

WHO IS ALLOWED TO ASK QUESTIONS.

AND WHO IS EXPECTED TO REMAIN SILENT.

THESE IDEAS BECOME PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

THEY'RE PASSED DOWN THROUGH FAMILIES, INSTITUTIONS, POLITICS, RELIGION, EDUCATION AND CULTURE.

AFTER A WHILE, PEOPLE JUST BEGIN TO ACCEPT THEM AS SOMETHING NORMAL.

BUT THERE'S NOTHING NORMAL ABOUT DECIDING THAT ONE HUMAN BEING IS WORTH MORE THAN ANOTHER.

HOW CAN YOU ACCEPT THAT?

AND WHO BENEFITS FROM YOUR ACCEPTANCE?


I
THEHAPPY

LOOKISM

SOME PEOPLE CAN MAKE MISTAKES, AND OTHERS ARE PUNISHED FOR NOTHING.

SOME PEOPLE ARE SIMPLY BELIEVED, AND OTHERS HAVE TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE.

SOME PEOPLE ARE CONSIDERED PEOPLE, AND OTHERS ARE NOT.

INSTEAD, THEY ARE REDUCED TO THEIR RACE, GENDER, CLASS OR SEXUALITY.

THIS IS ABSURD.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THERE WAS AN ALIEN INVASION?

WOULD WE FINALLY RECOGNISE EACH OTHER AS HUMAN BEINGS?

BUT THEN, YOU NEVER KNOW.

LOOKISM.

PEOPLE LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND DECIDE.

THEY DECIDE WHO SOMEBODY IS.

WHAT THEY ARE WORTH.

WHERE THEY BELONG.

WITHOUT KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT THEM.

WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT EACH OTHER?



DO NOT DEFER

WHY SHOULD YOU AUTOMATICALLY DEFER TO OTHERS?

WHAT MAKES SOMEBODY MORE INTELLIGENT, MORE CAPABLE, MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OR MORE DESERVING OF RESPECT THAN YOU?

PEOPLE OCCUPY DIFFERENT POSITIONS IN SOCIETY.

THE BOSS IS THE BOSS.

THAT IS THEIR POSITION.

IT DOES NOT MAKE THEM SUPERIOR TO YOU.

THERE IS NO NEED TO PERFORM SUBMISSION.

THERE IS NO NEED TO MAKE SOMEONE ELSE FEEL IMPORTANT AT THE EXPENSE OF YOURSELF.

YOUR VALUE AS A HUMAN BEING DOES NOT CHANGE BECAUSE OF SOMEBODY ELSE'S POSITION.

THOSE ARE DIFFERENT THINGS.



POWER

WHO CONTROLS POWER? THE ONE WHO HAS LEVERAGE. IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TITLE, THE STATUS OR THE IMAGE. IT'S ABOUT THE MONEY, THE INFORMATION, ACCESS AND THE ALLIANCES YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT.

ACCESS

THEY TEST YOU. YOU RESPOND. ACCESS. WHEN THEY ESCALATE, BOUNDARY. DISTANCE. EXIT. NO ACCESS.


WITH MY OWN HANDS

MONEY

WHEN YOU'VE GOT MONEY, EVERYTHING'S ALL GOOD. WHEN YOU HAVEN'T GOT MONEY, YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING BECOMES HARDER.

INNOCENCE AND WISDOM

THERE IS A LEAP WE ALL HAVE TO MAKE FROM INNOCENCE INTO WISDOM. AND THAT LEAP IS RARELY BEAUTIFUL WHILE IT'S HAPPENING. INNOCENCE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT IT DOESN'T KNOW. WISDOM HAS LIVED THROUGH SOMETHING. NOTHING.

EMOTIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

STOP EXHAUSTING YOURSELF TRYING TO SECURE YOUR PLACE IN SOMEBODY ELSE'S LIFE. ASK WHETHER THEY EVEN DESERVE A PLACE IN YOURS. THAT IS EMOTIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. YOUR HEART HAS RETURNED TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER.



LOYALTY

THEIR LOYALTY ENDS WHEN
THE BENEFITS STOP.

THEY GET WHAT THEY WANT.
THEY QUICKLY FORGET ABOUT YOU.

NOT EVERYONE THAT SMILES AT YOU
IS YOUR FRIEND.

THE SAME ONE THAT YOU CALL FRIEND
IS THE SAME ONE SILENTLY
PLOTTING AGAINST YOU.

FROM LOYALTY, CYON FLEX FEAT. DEF III
LOYALTY, 2021


UNITED
BEATIMEND

SUCCESSION 2

THE PECKING ORDER

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