

The Sound of Silence

All around me I can see a different world. Different, but familiar. The mountains are in the same place as I remember. The river too, and even some of the trees. I have a feeling that I have been here before, but I simply cannot remember why I feel this way. Then, in a flash, it comes to me. This is my street, or at least will be. It's so different from what I remember! No more trash, streets, buildings, cars, malls, gas stations, pollution. No more humans... how beautiful.

I walk along the soon-to-be sidewalk. I can see plants growing, little by little, as if I'm watching a time lapse video of the past, of how everything came to be. I feel as if each step that I take there are more and more animals around me, of splendid, magnificent, and unique characteristics. Some I had never seen in my life. I am in the middle of a forest now. I didn't even know there were trees here once.

Now I see a different animal, one that is without a doubt even more different from the others. It stands up like me, it walks like me, it moves like me, it talks like me... but it acts differently. I can feel a certain respect emanate from the creature, towards the forest, the animals, the plants. It has to hunt animals in order to survive, just like them all, but it still is respectful, somehow. It hunts what it needs. It cuts the right amount of trees to build its fire. It takes only the fruits it needs from the bushes. It takes just the right amount of water from the river. It uses whatever is around it to function and work in the middle of that already-formed society.

But suddenly, something happens. There is a shift, and the feeling of respect is not there anymore. I can feel the sense of superiority: they now think they are better than others. Animals start dying out. Plants burn around me. I can now see more creatures just

like them. And even more. We're like a plague that constantly grows. Ruins. Kills. We spread so quickly and so mercilessly, that the other animals don't even have a chance. We change the whole scenario. Now, cows are being put in pastures and forced to give milk, get fat, and die, in an endless circle. The river... is gone. We used all of its water. I see all those animals, as pure as snow, being killed by monsters. Being killed by us.

I feel all my weight vanishing from my body. I am as light as air, and I levitate. I go up, and up, until I can see our planet, our home, as a whole. I see the polar caps going from being as huge as a politician's pocket to as small as their level of honesty. Polar bears and penguins are trying to survive off of a small block of ice. I touch the ocean with my hands, expecting bitterly cold water, but instead, it is scalding, as if the sea was infuriated by our negligence.

It's as hot as hell in here. Everything is burning. Even the oceans, or what's left of it. It's terrifying. All of a sudden, everything turns black. I see nothing but darkness, I hear nothing but the sound of silence. Not a single animal - we killed them all, not a single tree - we cut and burned them down, not a single human voice - we ignored them all, just like we did with the elephant in the room. We ignored them until it was too late. Until it was all gone. A feeling of complete and absolute despair is taking over my body and I feel completely useless.

But then, I see it going backwards, a little bit, and then it fasts forward again. This time, something is different. People are actually united in one huge group, with only one purpose in mind: fix what they have been doing wrong. There is still hope. This time, it doesn't reach the point of total and complete silence. They were able to make it better,

and to avoid the terrible end we were destined to have. They were able to choose a different path; a better one.

“We are too,” I think to myself.

I am now in the place I recognize. Not only the mountains and river, but the buildings and streets too. And the cars, garbage, and pollution. I can't help but think of that second option. Of the second path we could take. What if we could actually help the world go back to what it once was? Maybe we can... We can reunite ourselves to help our home recover. We can pay attention to both isolated and collective actions. I think of the amount water we have in our world, and I think of how we could make it drop drastically. If we can make it drop, we can make it recover. How can we come up with those dumb excuses that “Oh, nothing I do will ever make a difference”? I see the creature. I see us. I see myself. Even though we each are just a small drop, a microscopic part of the ocean, this “drop” could still make a difference.

I hear the noisy cars in the street, throwing all that pollution; doing the perfect thing to help our planet improve. Look at them go. Let's trap heat in our home, right!? The feeling of despair is there again. But there is something else that comes along with it. Because I realize there is no immediate answer for our problems, and no planet we can run to if we irreparably ruin Earth. I know that we have to act. I have hope that we can act. I don't want to wait until we can only hear the sound of silence. Not anymore.