

KINGS OF ONE COLOR

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The ship was filling with the salty choking murk of the sea. It was not a scent, but a thickness that burned every orifice in the passenger's bodies. Everyone pushed the pain out of their eyes as the ship swayed back and forth leaving nothing but the nausea of the ocean only removed for those who had their sea legs from being traded already. It wasn't a nice sight with hundreds of people laid on boards built into the ship to resemble bunk beds covered with vomit and feces just asking for disease to be spread.

Plankinau stared through the cracks of the "bed" above him wondering if this was a new form of warfare. He understood that his now former king was in desperate need of a new water source, but in receiving that sustenance why would he allow the payment to become diseased and die upon arrival. He tried to push through hoping that he would survive the trip to find a new family in his new home.

The ship shifted drastically to the side rolling many of the sickly bodies on top of one another thanks to the harsh reality that was the ocean. Plankinau managed to dig his fingernails between the boards he was lying upon and held the rotting wood to hold himself in place. His neighbor in the most nearby "bed" rolled onto Plankinau's shoulder sharing his warm sweat and sickly saliva.

Another shift in the waves jolted the ship in the other direction. Plankinau again held his position, but felt a warm trickle pass behind his head dampening his hair and wrenching his imagination with the possible fluids he was now lying in. The scent of the cabin was so engrossing he could not possibly have known if he was just bathed in vomit, urine, or blood.

The revulsion of his situation forced him up. He shifted his weight left and right as he slid down his bunk down towards his feet where the

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walkway waited for him. There was no plan just an immediate need to get some distance between him and the inhumane hole he was stuck in.

Sliding down the wood left tender spots on his back and legs as the wood sheered away splintering his body with merciless wounds. Unable to sit up he dangled over the ledge at the end of the bunks. First his feet swayed with the movement of the ship, then his legs, and eventually when he was teetering from a point on his spine. His body twisted allowing him to fall off the bunk and to the steel floor below. He had not realized how high up he was, seven bunks from the ground and the fourth from the ceiling. The fall was painful, but there didn't appear to be anything broken, just some simple bruising that would form soon.

He looked up and down the aisle of the massive cabin seeing the grey feet of his countrymen regardless of what country that was. He wanted to feel for these men, he wanted to cry out and wail for their lost families, but this was just how life was. Plankinau made the decision to have a family with the knowledge that he may rip it apart one day. When that day came true he could only blame himself. Everyone on the ship was being traded to the black king's land, a place of hunger and famine. The white king was a smart man and if these were the men and women he had traded for his water source, then they must be the weakest and least useful in his entire kingdom.

The sheer volume of bodies being shipped was unfathomable. Plankinau had not realized how much it cost to purchase a water source. The bunks were ten high and at least thirty a level on each side of the walkway. Six hundred men lie sick and dying in this one cabin alone.

He recognized rich men and poor men from his old town. It had always been a place where the rich and poor did not mix, the status of your life depended on the status of your bankroll, but it was not the case here. They were all shipped together off to a land where you fought for your food.

Plankinau got to his feet and while attempting to stay balanced he clanked down the walkway tapping people's feet that appeared to be conscious. He did not know what he was doing, but as he tapped the dirtied soles of the sold they one by one squirmed to the end of their bunks and joined Plankinau on the ground.

Everyone seemed to follow Plankinau's lead tapping feet of others that appeared able to stand. Before long the walkway was crammed with grey complexions that resembled every man the world over with the exception of the kings. They were a horde of captives that had no purpose and no plot, just men and women left in the cold by their king, their representative from God.

The skin tones blended perfectly looking more like a grey gel that was morphing as they shifted around each other to move up and down the hallway. Their voices grew louder creating a low toned moan beginning to vibrate the structure of the ship itself. They looked like cattle waiting for slaughter and that was not a far departure from what they each felt.

They all had studied the days of old when people used abominations such as electricity and flying machines. The days when people looked different from one another and being so did not make you a King or closer to God. The lessons of religion normally just seemed metaphorical, as if they were told only to convince each other that difference is to be heralded, but it

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was a different case in that room. As the chanting pain began to torture each person's eardrums, the explanations of God lifting the single colored's out of the mire and onto the thrones felt like a call to action.

Plankinau had always wanted to be revered as a messenger of God and as he lost his identity alongside the others now threatening his breathing space he understood that the lessons taught the virtues of standing out. It was a message he had ignored his entire life, it was God telling him to take the lead and do what no man had ventured in thousands of years.

Plankinau forced his way to the end of the walkway where he thrashed his body against the locked door. Again his actions allowed the rest of the ashen skinned people to follow suit. And quickly the hundreds of passengers had split the old oak door in half. Some of the smaller of the traded had already been trampled and some had crumpled into corners from their illness, but the majority of the mass flowed out the doorframe.

The hallway they poured into had other cabins housing other men given in barter who were pushing at their doors testing the stamina of the wood.

Plankinau could not help but feel that the men following him were a soulless army even though he understood they all had feelings and thoughts. He couldn't get past the immediacy of their obeying. He led them down the hall and up a staircase. The sky shone bright blue stinging their pupils as they received their first whiff of non-diseased air. The thickness of the ocean air continued to burn their wounds, but the aroma of the open air gave them hope.

Plankinau saw his opportunity and seized it the only way he knew how. He would be a king, a grey king. The crew of twenty was simple to overthrow. It was a scene of pain and torture filled with the screams of men as their flesh was ripped from their bones. Maybe the brutality of the situation should have caused the human mind to shrink in disgust, but since the world was filled with factions who made public displays of such violence a commonality, the human mind continued as normal.

The captain was the final intended casualty of the day, meeting his end after being slowly quartered and tossed to the chaos of the sea.

Plankinau took command of the vessel. He spouted propaganda from the bible. He spoke of the kings of each color and how they are esteemed because of their differences, but he was different also. He was the only man who would stand up and lead. He was the only one who could become the grey king.

He told them they were not going to the old Americas where the black king would let them starve. They would not return to old Europe where the white king allowed them to slaughter each other for money. The yellow king of Asia, the red king of Australia, and the fat king of Africa were all detriments to their mission.

He steered the ship to the side knowing that he had to change courses in order to find a new land, a place uninhabited where he, the grey king could reign over peace.