

Isaac Asimov Parody Piece

Earth wasn't always so full of strife and terror. Once a long while ago it was vibrant and full of life. You could go to the tropics and explore massive rain forests and visit beaches and bask in the sun. Now there's nothing but black skies and even blacker earth. Where the rainforests once stood now only stands buildings and gutters. The oceans are filled with trash and waste from society. Cityscapes and streets stretch out and over the beaches. There is no longer any beauty to be found on this gray world.

Maybe that's why so many left. Maybe the people got sick of breathing in toxic air and drinking contaminated water. Maybe they missed the color. No one knows for sure, what we do know, however, is where they went, *to the stars*. That was their motto, their slogan, "Escape to the stars!" and many did. Billions went in the Leaving. Starships packed to the brim coasting in the sea of stars, hundreds of them, the Exodus Fleet, floating just out of the reach of Earth. It was handshake that could never be complete, a romantic interest that could never come true. It was loved one standing on the edge of oblivion, and in an instant and a flash of light, they were gone. Five billion people erased from Earth's control. They left and took all their memories with them, along with the technology to follow.

We had the means and power to follow the Exodus Fleet; we even had the will to see it through. The Second Exodus was our shining light in a black and dismal sky and as quick as it had appeared in the sky, it was wiped from existence. Radicals, they were called, proclaiming the doom of anyone who attempted to leave, including all those from the Exodus Fleet. They announced the evil and heresy of the ships and then, without a second thought, destroyed them. When the ships went so did humanity's spirit. We as a race lost the drive to carry on. For years we sat and died in the smog and disease that was our planet. The rich and powerful managed to escape to the moon to await their destruction, but they only delayed the inevitable. Slowly but surely we were coming to our doom.

Just as Earth was about to take its last weak and feeble breath, a spark of hope winked into existence. A small and dim spark, but that was all that was necessary. When the breaks in the smog clouds came, we could see the ever faint glow of a star ship. Almost one hundred years we had gone alone and here was a visitor. It was almost as if the ship knew its presence wouldn't suffice humanity's distrust of outsiders, so it sent emissaries. Shuttles rained down from the heavens to a dead planet and its even deader population. "We won't make the same mistakes." Everyone kept telling themselves that. "We will finally leave this god awful place!" Humanity had recovered its drive and soul.

The visitors were what everyone expected, those who had left on the Exodus Fleet and their children and grand children. They were only humans, but in the eyes of a dying people they looked like gods. Famine and plague had dwindled Earth's people to almost nothing, and compared to our saviors, we were nothing more than dirt.

Many wonder why they came back. Some think it was out of pity, others think it was divine intervention; maybe it was a combination of both. They came back with en mass. The thousands of shuttles belonged to a fleet of twenty or thirty city sized ships, and those ships to maybe hundreds more.

Of the hundred million or so people left on Earth, only a few thousand decided to stay. The visitors forced no one, and even left the technology behind. The rest were swept up from the derelict cities and slums and flown out into the sea of stars. Like a dying dog swept of the street, humanity was swept up from Earth and flown to its future. Many looked back as they flew away, back at their former home. A once green and fruitful bastion, turned into a grey and black ball of soot. Tears were shed and many were heartbroken. Wall sized pictures of the old Earth were hung around shuttles as a reminder of the old days in centuries past.

Almost two hundred years after the Exodus Fleet left a dying planet; the remnants of its dying people were now finally safe. They were finally on their way to paradise. The Second Exodus Fleet was now floating in the sea of stars. Small pin pricks of light among the swaths of fire and gas. Silent and stout in their stance and as quickly as the first had gone, the second vanished from existence. Earth sat alone in silence. Nothing moved and nothing changed. The grey sphere that was Earth could now spend the rest of its life in silence and peace, free from the troubles and strife of humanity.