

Anya P.

## Stranded

The sounds of seagulls surrounded me, the fresh salted breeze gently pushed against my skin. Sand and seawater covered my body from head to toe. Dazed and confused, I sat upright, and my eyes squinted. There were no clouds in the sky and the beaming sunlight almost blinded me. Looking around frantically, I wondered how I ended up on a beach in the middle of nowhere? It's impossible, me and my best friend Elia were boating. I must have blacked out somehow and forgotten what had happened. While I ran my fingers through my hair, I felt the irritable sensation of dried blood. Did I injure myself somehow?

While wiping the sand from my shorts, I started to walk along the beach beginning to search for Elia. Faint chirping sounds came from the forest and the waves crashed into the sharp, black rocks near a tall cliff. After about half an hour I began to panic. Surviving in the wilderness on your own seemed almost impossible for a city girl like me. I don't even know how to hunt or fish. Sitting on the wet sand, I stared into the distance for hours, thinking about any way to improve my situation. The sun was slowly setting in the west and its color faded to orange. Suddenly, I heard sounds of small footsteps behind me.

Goosebumps crawled down my neck as I turned around to see Elia. There were small splashes of blood splattered across her arms and legs. Her face was pale and had a shocking look. My eyes filled with tears, and I rushed into her arms.

"Y-you're alive," she stuttered slowly with a slight smile on her face.

"What happened to your arms?" I asked, worried. For her to be by my side made me feel relieved.

"I don't know, I just woke up by that cliff over there."

"Alright, I'm just glad you're ok."

"Yeah, me too. But we need to find where our boat went."

Elia and I started to run around the bushes and trees, looking for the other end of the beach. My mind was racing, as I realized that the forest was too thick and who would know what kind of animals were in there. For now, it's best we stay right where we are and find food fast. My stomach groaned.

We continued to stroll around the forest while eating blackberries that we found by a thorn bush. All we needed now was shelter, however, this forest has barely any place to sleep. Most likely, this island wouldn't have a cave or a plain of some sort. Most of the trees' trunks were thick and tall. Moss and mushrooms covered the roots and there were sounds of clicking made by the woodpeckers in the distance. How could birds survive on a tiny island like this with barely any food? A couple of hours later, small drops of water dripped from the trees above onto my head; it started to rain. Like this could get any worse. The water made the ground moist, and my feet sank each time I stepped forward.

After a long, vigorous trip, we came across a steep hill with old, stone-carved steps. Ancient people must have lived here, what if there still here? They could get us out of this place. As we gasped between steps, we could see a large, stone building in the distance.

"Is that...a temple?" Elia said out of breath while resting her hands on her knees.

My eyes widened with amazement.

"It sure is." I looked at Elia with my jaw still dropped.

We both quickly slid down the slope and rushed inside to avoid the rain. It was dark and we could hardly see. Each step we took closer into the temple, the darker it got. This whole place was like the movie, Indiana Jones. I continued walking without focusing on where I was walking, and I felt a loose brick beneath my foot. In fear, I paused, and it sank in, causing me to crash to the ground. Elia quickly picked me back up and started to pull me with her further into the temple. I heard quick swifts of arrows shooting across the room. My vision turned blurry, and my body began to feel floppy. The deeper we went, the colder it got, and my wet socks got ice cold and I felt a burning sensation in my feet.

We must have been running for hours, or so it felt as if it were. My feet were numb, and Elia was still gasping for air until I couldn't feel the ground anymore. Slowly, I looked down, the ground was gone. We were both falling into nothingness.

Rats were chirping and hissing as I lifted my neck from the ground. My legs were cut up and pieces of grass were spread across my legs and hands.

"Anya, we're stuck." Elia was pale and her eyes were wide.

I scraped off the dry dirt from my eyes and looked around. The bones of dead bodies surrounded me. The pit was closed off on all sides except for the wall behind me which had an opening at the top. Elia is tall enough to lift me up there.

"Elia, can you help lift me to the edge?" I asked, struggling to get back on my feet.

"But, what about me?" She said with a tear running down her cheek.

"I'll pull you up after, I promise."

While climbing up onto her shoulders I reached high for that edge. My finger grazed it when suddenly, the ground started rumbling. The pieces of bones moved back into their original forms and stood up as if they were alive. Elia pushed my feet higher into the air and I frantically squirmed my body onto the cobblestone surface.

"Hurry, hurry, pull me up!" Elia yelled; her eyes filled with pure terror.

I reached back down to grab Elia's hand when the skeletons started pulling her back down. My hand got sweaty, and her fingers slowly slipped away from my grasp and her body fell back down into the pit. The skeletons hovered over her body and teared her apart. Gasping for air, I ran in the opposite direction. I could hear her ear-piercing scream behind me, calling my name. There was a light at the end of the tunnel, but shadows slowly covered the exit. They were more skeletons; it was like a never-ending spree of them. I stopped in my tracks, backing away. The skeletons approached me and dragged me by the arms, their cold fingers dug into my skin. They dragged me with them back into the pit.

A few years later, a couple were going for a ride in their yacht when a terrible storm hit. Their boat sank and they both washed up on that very same island, found the same temple, even fell into the same pit. It was like history repeating itself. Something about that island was weird, everything was, actually. It was as if it were a magnet, a magnet attracting people to their doom. No one has ever found a reasonable cause for all of these deaths; mysterious was written all over it. There was a pattern, a cycle, but it all just leads to a dead end. Till this day, it is continuously happening to people, like a loop. Just over and over and over, again...

