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The Beginning

“I can't go back to yesterday because I was a different person then.” - *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

You might be wondering how I got stuck in a battle against Peter Pan and Long John Silver in this magical world. Well, that is not something which is easy to explain so I should probably go back to the beginning. And yes, I promise it will be worth the wait.

It started about four months ago, when I was in my local library. School had just finished for the summer, which I was thankful for, as school is not my favourite place. I might have been the nerdy girl sat reading on my lunch break while the other children played with their friends but that didn't mean I enjoyed the lessons.

My friends were inside the pages of the book, I was living the adventure beside them. Sometimes, I would be

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asked if I wanted to join in and play but even then I just didn't seem to fit in. It is just not who I am, the one to be friendly and play with others, my solitude was where I preferred to be.

After school when everyone would go home, I would normally go straight to the library. I never wanted to go home. Being home is a lonely place to be. My mother died when I was very young, so I don't remember much of her. My dad said she would read to me in bed but I imagine most parents do that with their children.

My father says I get my red hair from my mother but I just don't see it. She didn't have red hair. In all the pictures I have seen of her dotted around the house, she has auburn-brown hair but I guess that might be because of the camera. Whereas mine is more of a fiery red, not only that but its naturally curly. It's like trying to tame a beast when I put it up into a ponytail most mornings. In most of her pictures, it's always flat. Maybe I was given the unlucky gene of messy hair.

My father is always at work. He loves his job a bit too much I think as he is hardly around. It's either that or he uses it to distract himself from my mother. He has told me what he does over and over again but for the likes of me, I just can't remember. It's just something which doesn't interest me, most likely an office job. If he was an

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archaeologist or a pilot, I'm sure that I would remember.

Whatever he did it made him come home late, so I would head to the library every day after school until he was due home. The Library in my town is not like most libraries that you find in the cities. They are more modern and have people queuing up to be seen about their money and home problems. Our town library felt forgotten.

Most of the books on the shelves were early editions and covered in dust. Some of the covers were in a terrible condition, with rips and tears on many of them. I would often find an old book, it wouldn't matter which one it was and sink into the green antique arm chair at the back of the room. There were two small rips on the left arm and it would have this strange smell to it but it would always welcome me into its embrace. I would sink into the cushions and escape into the book. This was home to me.

The first time it happened was strange. I was in a section of the library where most of the books hadn't been read in so long. Some of the shelves had a thick layer of dust on them. Sometimes, I wondered whether they cleaned the place, I doubt the librarian did. She was old, with short grey curly hair and wore a pair of thick rounded glasses. She always had that old person smell or

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was it just the smell of decay? She barely ever left her seat at the front desk.

I was looking at the books, scrolling between the shelves. All of the covers seemed the same. Plain covers which were mostly red, brown or green with golden text. I ran the tips of my fingers across the spines. I enjoyed the feeling of holding an old novel. You just didn't get this kind of feeling with an ereader. But, just as I touched these old books, I heard a lot of different voices. It was like each voice was shouting over the other to be heard. I wasn't sure what it was at the time but now I know it was the voices of the characters trapped inside the books.

I had picked up a book, which I hadn't had the chance to read before; it had a red cover. I traced the indented golden words of the title, TREASURE ISLAND by Robert Louis Stevenson. A story I had never read, to be spoken aloud and judging by the cover, I was presuming that I was the first one to read this particular book in many years. The front cover was plain except for the golden sail boat amongst little waves. As I sat down in the chair with the book in my hands, the voices around me got louder. I was alone in the library as it was always quiet this time of day. I figured the voices must be in my head, so I read aloud.

'Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey and the rest of these

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gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island,' I read the words as easily as they came. I pushed back a strand of my hair which was distracting me. That was when it first happened; the images came to my mind first and it felt like I was there. I could hear the waves of the wild sea crashing against the hull of the ship. I continued to read, 'From the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted.'

It happened again, however, this time it was different. The voices had gotten louder. The sound of the waves hitting against a ship had vanished. But this time I could feel it. The water. I looked down at my feet and there I was standing in the ocean. The crystal clear water had only come up to my knees but it had soaked through and most likely ruined my school trousers. I could see my shoes sinking into the wet sand, they were definitely not suited for the ocean. If someone saw me now, they would think that I'm a crazy person, in my school uniform, getting ever more soaked by the crashing waves.

I had no idea how I ended up in the ocean from the library. Usually the sound of crashing waves is due to imagining the scene but there was no way I could be imagining this. It was too realistic.

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I glanced down and noticed that I still had the book. I placed it carefully into my small leather backpack, which was covered in tears and patches. I couldn't have the library moaning about a damaged book, especially an old edition like this one. It was probably worth a fortune, or it would have been if it was in someones private collection, untouched.

The thing about this bag, is that it used to belong to my mother. My father said she carried it everywhere with her. Whether or not this was true, I did not mind. It was my own little piece of my mother which I carried everywhere I went. I liked to imagine that the patches over the bag are from her own adventures.

Of course, this had never happened to me before. Often when I read, I felt like I was part of the story but never like this. I have never heard of this happening to anyone before, being absorbed into a book and becoming a part of their world. Another world. Saying that, this is every reader's dream to become a part of the story. I remember reading a book where it happened to someone before. If they read aloud, they would bring the characters to life but with the cost of something going into the book. But, that was just a story; I had never thought it would happen to anyone realistically, let alone myself.

If I am here, does that mean someone has left the

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book? Surely, that is not how it works. And, what if I want to leave? How do I get back? Does someone have to read me out of this book, just like in that one? But, what if no one can read this book, because I have it with me. No one knows that I am in here, the librarian will just assume I went home and my father will think I have run off. I cannot do that to him. I have to find a way out of here.

I looked around; I was on an island. There was golden sand, palm trees and I was surrounded by the calm clear ocean. I couldn't tell how big it was but it was definitely a smallish island. There was no one around, well not visibly anyway. So, I sat down on the beach and took my shoes off. I didn't want to be walking around in ruined shoes and it had been a while since I had had sand between my toes. We didn't have a beach local to us, I think the last time we went to the beach was about two years ago.

My mind was racing with questions. What was I going to do? Do I just wait here and hope someone finds me? What am I going to do about food? My dad's going to kill me when he sees my shoes. Those were just a few of the things running through my mind.

I waited for what felt like forever, in reality it was probably around twenty minutes. I didn't have a watch

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on me and my father didn't allow me to have a phone.

I set out to walk along the coast of the island. Inland was covered in what seemed like a wild forest. Untamed blackberry bushes surrounded the edges of the trees and there didn't seem to be any visible path through. I had no idea what kind of animals might be waiting for me in there. It seemed to be best to stay where I could see my full surroundings, for now. I didn't want anyone sneaking up on me.

I don't know how far I had walked around the island but from what I could tell, there was still more to go. I came across a few old bottles of empty rum with labels that had faded in the light or been destroyed by the weather. I also found some rusted swords half buried in the sand. Now, as a fan of pirates and fantasy, swords and sword fights have always interested me. Coming across a sword that I could use, even for a bit of fun, would be awesome.

I was lucky enough to find one which wasn't too rusty. Its handle was designed like a squid, the head was the pommel, the body formed the grip, while the tentacles spread out to form the cross-guard. The blade was dull, no shine to it and had only a small amount of rust on the tip. It was in a far better state than any of the others.

I just had to have it. I carried it around, swinging it in

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front of me. Sometimes, I jumped from side to side with a slash through the air or a jab at the fallen trees buried in the sand. If anyone had seen me, they must have thought I was fighting a ghost or just being plain silly. But to me, it felt amazing. I was in a different land, a land I didn't recognise, with a sword. I could use it to fend off mighty beasts and rescue a princess, who said a princess could only be saved by a prince. My father would never let me have a sword but he wasn't here. This sword was mine and nobody else's.

I was not paying too much attention to my surroundings, who would when you have just found a sword. It was distracting me from arriving in a world where no one else seemed to be around. If I couldn't find a way to get home, I might as well enjoy myself for a little bit. It didn't last for too long as I managed to trip over a hole in the sand. I now had grains of sand buried in my hair and over my face. I was lying on my back, looking up at the sky, when I noticed it. There was nothing. No animals. No noise. Nothing. What was this place really?

I looked around and there it was half buried in the sand. A bottle. I crawled across the sand and pulled it out. The label was barely visible, most likely damaged by the sea or the sun, maybe even both. The content of the bottle was strange, there was no rum left inside, only a

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piece of paper.

I turned the bottle upside down and shook it until I could pull the paper out. It did not feel like the paper that books are made from, or even the scraps of paper we use at school. The paper was thick and stained, it reminded me of a piece of parchment. Tied around it was red string, holding the paper closed. I pulled the string away and the parchment unravelled. Thinking about it, this didn't feel like string. I felt it a bit more, rubbing it between my fingers. It wasn't string; it was hair. Long red hair much like mine. I began to read:

Welcome to the world of the Lost Words, this is where the magic begins. When a story turns 100 years old, it ends up here. Characters are ripped out of their story and dumped into this world, some will remember who they were but many will forget. Reread the words to get you home. Don't lose your book, like I did. You will become trapped here. Forever lost in this mess of a world.

Tiff

So I wasn't the only one.



2

Second Visit

“I know not all that may be coming but be it what it will, I’ll go to it laughing.” - *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville

After re-reading the words from the book, I was returned to the library. I was back in the old green seat, as if I hadn’t moved. My trousers were still damp and my clothes were covered in sand. If the sand hadn’t been all over me, I would never have believed that I had been to that strange world. I felt the urge to visit the island again, to pick up the sword I had found and explore the woods. That would be worth another visit, an adventure I wouldn’t get anywhere else.

I checked the book out from the library after begging the librarian to let me take it. Because it was such an

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old book, they don't generally allow them outside of the library. She let me take it. I figured it was because I was in here so much, I had become a regular. I placed the book inside my mother's bag and raced home.

My father was just pulling into the driveway in his old banger. That's what I called it at least; the car was ancient. My father bought the car for my mother before I was born, I think he hangs onto it like I hold on to her bag. Every trip we take in it, we end up stranded waiting for a breakdown truck to come and fix it. The tyres were bare, the blue paint was fading and it was covered in scratches.

We sat down at the dinner table and ate the Chinese my father brought back with him. It was always a takeaway. It was not often that we would have a proper meal. He was always busy with work and I only know a little about cooking. I didn't mind it so much that we had Chinese, it is my favourite takeaway to have. I had chicken chow mein with pork balls. I always had that as my choice, sometimes he would get us a crab meat soup too but I guess they didn't have any crab today.

'How was school today?' my father asked. He sounded tired but then he always did. His black hair was all over the place and it often looked like he had been pulling at it. The bags under his eyes didn't help either.

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'It was okay. They played a film in class but I just sat there reading one of my books,' I replied, while I pushed a piece of chicken around the plate with my fork.

'Ah, I see,' he continued eating. The silence which followed was awkward. Minutes had flown by before he said anything else. 'Have you been to a beach lately?'

'No,' what a strange thing to ask. There was no beach today and I couldn't exactly tell him where I had been.

'Oh, do you know where the sand has come from?' he indicated to the sand which I had unknowingly dragged around the house with my shoes. What should I say? I picked up my empty plate and rinsed it off under the tap.

'No, I didn't even notice it,' I sat back down at the table and waited for him to finish his food. I never see him for long, we hardly spend any time together. I suppose I should be grateful even if it did feel awkward, it was still time together.

It wasn't long after dinner that I wanted to try again. To return to that island and have an adventure. Who wouldn't want to? It was just a small island, there was nothing to be afraid of and as long as I had the book with me, I could come back.

I said goodnight to my father and dashed up the stairs. I was already out of my school uniform and had changed into something I felt would be far more appropriate. I was

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wearing my favourite shirt and a pair of short leggings which hopefully wouldn't get too ruined if I landed back in the ocean. I also had a spare set of clothes in the bag in case I got mine wet. I felt like I was prepared

As I went to place my bandana and goggles into the bag, I noticed it was missing. I couldn't see it. Sure there were the normal things I had in there but the note from the bottle was gone. I had shoved it into the bag without even looking. I know it went in, I felt my hand go inside the bag when I dropped it in.

I removed my school things from the bag and placed a few items inside that I thought I might need. It was odd, the note had disappeared and there was an extra patch which had appeared on the bag. At first, I thought it was just my mind playing tricks on me but I am sure that it wasn't there before.

I placed my bag over my shoulder and grabbed a small bit of rope out of my art box. I tied the rope around me like a belt, with several loops hanging off it. For some reason, the sword I had found back on the beach didn't come back with me either. I had a feeling that things from that world couldn't come back with me but at least when I returned, I could place the sword around my belt.

Eager to get back, I sat on the bed, pulled open 'Treasure Island' and read the first line out loud again.

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This time it felt different, like something dark was pulling at my words. I should have taken this as a warning.

I had arrived at a different place than before. There was no beach or forest in sight. I was in the streets of a city or town, I wasn't sure which but I was definitely not in my world. The cobblestone streets in this place were smaller than the roads at home; you would not be able to fit a car on it. Various weeds were sprouting up between the stones, making the path uneven and dangerous.

I closed the book and went to place it inside my bag when I spotted it. A black patch had appeared on the spine. I had ruined the book; the library would never let me take out any more books. It's not my fault, I didn't even know it was on there. How was it there? I ran my finger down the spine and over the patch. It wasn't wet, it felt like it had always been there as a part of the book but I know it hadn't been. A surge of cold flushed over me and I placed the book away. I will try and clean it tomorrow.

I looked around, trying to decide which direction I should go in. I decided to head in the direction which seemed to be pulling at me the most.

I strolled down the quiet street, looking around cautiously. Little brown garden pots with vibrant red

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flowers hung from the edges of windows. They seemed to be the only things to be taken care of in this place, as the buildings looked neglected. The windows were filthy and seemed like they had never been cleaned. I noticed a couple of the windows had cracks in them, like they had been hit by rocks. Something strange was happening in this place.

I continued down the street in hopes of finding someone, instead I found something else. It was the first time I saw him. The shadow of a young boy flew across the building fronts. If I had known who it was then, I probably would have run away but that's not what happened. The vibrant flowers appeared to have had their life drained from them after the shadow passed, as all that remained was a withered version of them in the pots.

I chased after the shadow, along the streets of this strange place.

After several minutes of chasing it through the unusually long street, it disappeared down a dark alleyway. I looked around and couldn't see the shadow or what had been casting it, so I followed it. Crates were spread along the walls, as if some store had dumped their waste down the side. Printed on the side of some of the crates was a picture of a fish which would explain the

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smell. It smelt like a fishmongers market stall, or at least what used to be.

This town was very odd, the only living thing I had seen was the shadow. Not a single person. This was odd considering the amount of homes and flowers I had seen when I arrived here. There had to be someone looking after them. It wasn't that shadow, all that was doing was draining their life force.

I was getting closer to the other side of the alleyway and I could see the opening into another street when I began to hear it; the noise of people coughing. I don't know how I was so oblivious to it before because it was loud. I looked closer at the dark crooks of the alleyway which was when I noticed them. Hidden inside the crates were people. They all seemed lifeless. Their skin was dry and clung to the bone and reminded me of death. Flies were crawling over their entire bodies and buzzing around their heads but they just weren't reacting. Were they dead? Never had I seen something like this. I couldn't remove my eyes from them. What was going on in this place? Where was I?

I pulled myself away and continued down the alley until I appeared on the other side. The street had what I could only describe as an attempt of a market. There were only five stalls. Each stall was put together with a

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few poles and what seemed to be weathered bed sheets acting as a cover. I walked up to the first stall. To my surprise, it was a food stall with a variety of fruit mostly but they looked bruised and partly rotten. I had guessed people here would have to eat but from the looks of the people in the alleyway, I didn't think they did. The guy behind the food stall had wiry thin patchy hair. His skin clung to his bones like the others. Was it starvation causing this or was it something else?

'Can I help you?' his voice was hoarse and hollow. I had eaten before I came to this place and I had no money. At least none that I would think work here.

'No thank you,' I walked on to see what the other stalls had. The stalls each had a variety of things; one stall had a mixture of clothing from what I could only assume were different time periods. One stall had a very obscure selection of jewellery. Another just had a mixture of colourful stones and the last one had a range of weapons. Half of them had gone rusty while the other half seemed broken or severely damaged. As much as I would love another sword, these just weren't going to be good enough or practical to use. Not that I would actually need one.

'You, girl,' the voice was toneless but my curiosity got the better of me.

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I turned to look at who had called me over.

He was different from the stallholders and the others in the alleyway; his skin wasn't paper thin and his vibrant blue eyes shone through his wild, long black hair. A sword hung from his belt and his arms were scarred, especially around his left hand. Most people would have classed him as the ruggedly handsome type but to me he was just a creepy guy who was trying to talk to me. Why was it he was the only one who didn't look dead?

'Me?' my voice broke. I was taken aback by him. This strange man in front of me felt familiar, like I had met him before.

'Yes, you. Where did you come from? You're not from around here,' his voice got quieter as he approached me. How does he know I am not from here? Do I stick out that much? I didn't think these clothes were a great idea. Or maybe he was once from my world also.

'I'm just passing through,' the words barely made it out of my mouth before he snatched a hold of my arm and dragged me into a doorway of an old building.

'Passing through,' he repeated the words softly with his face pressed so close to mine that I could smell his foul breath. Don't they have toothpaste in this world? He looked down the street in search of something but I didn't spot what that may have been. 'Oh, I see. You are

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just like her.'

He went quiet as if he was thinking. What did he mean I was just like her? Who was he on about?

'Like who?' I questioned but he mustn't have heard. Either that, or he just ignored me.

'You must go home, grab your book and get out of here,' he was still looking around the street. What had him so afraid? Hang on, did he mention a book? Does he know I am not of this world? Who is this strange man? 'Go, before he catches you.'

'Before who catches me?'

'Just read yourself out of here. Do you want to end up trapped like the rest of them?'

He clearly wasn't going to answer any of the questions I had asked. I pulled out *Treasure Island* and opened the first page. I looked up at the strange man who was determined for me to leave here; he looked afraid, more than he did before. Was he scared of the book? Well, even if I wanted to ask him, he had already made it clear that he wouldn't answer any of my questions. I reread the words that brought me into this world.

I was back on my bed. Hardly any light was coming in from the window; the sun had set long ago. I placed the book on the bedside unit and laid down on the bed

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looking up at the ceiling. Even though I hadn't really done anything, I felt exhausted. Going from the immediate sunlight in that world to darkness was straining my eyes.

That was when something odd happened. The room had drastically dropped in temperature. I thought I could see frost slowly covering the window in my room and I noticed the room was getting darker. So dark that the outline of the chest of drawers faded away.

That's when I first felt the cold hands on my arm.



3

Trapped

“It is a great misfortune to be alone, my friends; and it must be believed that solitude can quickly destroy reason.” - *The Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne

That moment played over and over. The book I had visited only twice, had swung open and it appeared. The shadow I had seen soaring around that dreadful town, grabbed a hold of me. It didn't feel like a normal hand, it didn't even look like a normal person. Frost spread up my leggings from its hand and I collapsed.

The first thing I couldn't help but notice when I awoke in that dark place were the cold bars surrounding me. I was in a cage. I couldn't really tell where I was, but I knew I was outside. I could feel the cold breeze against my skin.

It wasn't until morning that I noticed I was inside

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a birdcage hanging from a tree, and I wasn't the only one. There were others hanging around me. There were probably more than fifty cages spread out around me. From what I could tell, many of the birdcages had children inside them, and the forest floor below us was covered in bones. The children in the cages were of different ages, that was easy to see. But every one of them looked scared, and I had a feeling it was not because of the cages themselves. It had to do with the shadow, there was no doubt about it.

'Hey,' I whispered to the girl in the cage beside me. She looked over at me but then turned away.

'Hey, where are we?' I knew she could understand me but she just wasn't answering. She was hiding her arms from me. I looked around at the other children; they were all hiding their arms. That was when I saw it; my arm had something of a mystery to it now. Two black hand prints had appeared, I was marked by the shadow. Was that what they were hiding? What did the hand prints mean?

Had they all come from the real world? They can't be. With this many children, and those bones, surely there would be more attention focused on children disappearing into books. Of course, they don't know they have gone into books, their parents probably think

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they ran away or worse. Oh no, is that what my father is going to think? That I deserted him. First my mother dies and then I have disappeared. I had to get back.

'Hey, what is going on here?' I yelled. That got their attention. All of the children turned around and placed their finger on their lips in a shushing motion. At first they ignore me, and now they want me to to be quiet. I can't just sit here and wait.

I looked around for a way out, anything I could use to get myself free from the cage and back home. The bars to my cage were cold and had small vines hanging from the bottom but that was of no use to me. The forest floor was too far down to reach any of the sticks or even bone, and I couldn't reach a branch to break off. There was nothing I could use to break out of the cage.

I thought I might be able to swing the cage and snap the rope that was holding us up in the trees, but after several minutes, it had appeared. The shadow burst out of the leaves of one of the trees, and clung onto one of the cages. The boy inside the cage was shaking. He pushed himself away from the shadow and backed himself up against the bars. His eyes were filled with fear, tears flooded from his eyes. He knew what was coming, and he was terrified. I wasn't prepared for it.

What was the shadow? Why was the boy so scared

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of it? But my questions were soon answered when the shadow jumped over to another cage and grabbed a hold of another child's arm. The boy screamed. His skin became dry and clung to his bones, his eyes turned black and his scream turned into silence. The shadow had sucked the life out of the boy.

Once it had finished feeding on him, it floated above the cage. The bottom of the cage swung open, and the boy's corpse smashed into the ground. It laid there broken and buried amongst the other bodies, surrounded by the wild forest floor.

I suddenly understood why all those captured in the cages were terrified, I was in fear for my life. It had killed him in front of us and just dropped him like he was garbage. Why had it happened? What was going on? These were the two questions repeated over and over again in my mind.

The shadow soared over to my cage and grabbed a hold of the bars. I scrambled as far back as I could, even though that didn't help the others, I wanted it to help me. But then my cage slowly began to lower.

I heard laughter coming from below me and when I looked back through the bars, there he was. A young boy, probably around my age. Just like the strange man from

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that town, this beautiful boy strangely had a familiar feeling to him. The entire time I had my eyes on him, he had this youthful smile spread across his face. He seemed happy with our misery.

The boy pulled out a flute from his belt, and began to play. The melody was soft and hypnotic, it lulled you beyond control. Through hazy eyes, I could see that the shadow appeared to be forcibly pulled away from the cages and dragged down to the boy's feet. The shadow belonged to this boy.

He stopped playing the flute, and the effects it had over me vanished. I stared down at him, the smile on his face contorted. He now appeared lonely and lost.

'I don't think you are her,' the boy said. He had a soft, gentle voice which made me feel like he was a comforting friend. That was when I realised who he was. That gentle voice, the flute, the shadow, oh the shadow was a girl with long, wavy, auburn hair, who else could it be?

'Peter Pan,' I exclaimed, trying not to show my excitement at seeing the boy who I wished would take me away to Neverland. The boy of legends, the stories and the magical adventures that I dreamed about when I was younger. It had all come crashing down.

'The name is Pan,' his voice had changed now. It was still soft but you could hear in his tone that something

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was wrong. 'If you knew who I was, why did you come to my realm?'

'I didn't. I was pulled in by your shadow,' I had tried to explain but he just wasn't listening to me. His eyes filled with darkness, and his hair faded in colour. It was like he had been consumed by the shadow.

'You are in my realm now, which means you belong to me,' Pan explained. He strolled around my cage, and brushed his fingers against the bars. I moved myself around as he walked. Keeping as much distance as I could from him.

Bang!

Boom!

Out of nowhere, two large explosions shook the forest around us, plumes of smoke flooded into our surroundings.

'Get after him! This time don't let him get away,' Pan ordered. Pan floated off the forest floor and up above the smoke.

My sight had gone, the smoke caused my eyes to water. Around me I could hear the faint coughs of the other children as my own lungs began to feel heavy. The heat was intense, I had never been close to a fire like this before. I'm used to being around a bonfire once a year, but the heat was nothing like that.

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'What happened to you staying out of this world?' I recognised that voice. It belonged to that strange man who told me to go home. Why was he here? Back in the town he was looking out for something, it must have been Pan. It was his shadow I had spotted across the buildings.

'I did but that shadow pulled me back in to the book,' I replied. I could barely see him through the smoke. He was just a shadow that was blurred in front of me. My eyes were flooding with tears. Although this was to be expected with all of this smoke, part of it was because I found Pan terrifying.

'Ah, I see,' the voice paused. I watched him come closer and place his hands onto the bars of my cage as he tried to pull it open. He had long bulging scars on both of his hands. 'His shadow is a monster. You best keep away from him now that you are trapped here in this world with us.'

Trapped? What did he mean by that? Those were not the words I was hoping to hear. He was meant to say, I will free you and get you back home. I couldn't be trapped here. I won't last that long.

Once the cage was open, I climbed down and followed him through the smoke. He had rescued me, so of course I was going to follow him. I could hear the other cages

KEVIN PEAKE

being opened, he must have come here with a team. I wonder if he knew I was here or whether it was just a coincidence. Either way, it had to be better than being Pan's food. Now if I could just get some answers from him.

'What do you mean I am trapped?' I asked. I probably didn't phrase it in a polite way but I was panicking. This was not the kind of adventure I expected when I first landed on that small island, where I was playing out the fantasy of being a sword fighter. No, this was worse than that. I was pulled into this world, and thrown into a cave. And that shadow, it drained that poor boy of his life.

'The shadow pulls people from your world into here,' he replied. He grabbed a hold of my hand and led me through the smoke. 'I have met others like you, but you remind me of someone who came here around ten years ago. Say, what is your name?' He led me through the forest. I could feel twigs breaking beneath my feet, at least I hoped they were twigs and not bones. I do not know what direction he is taking me in, all I know is that he has saved me from something which would have probably killed me.

'A gentleman would give his name before asking a lady,' I replied.

'I am not a gentlemen, nor are you a lady,' he laughed.

LOST WORDS

It sure wasn't the answer I was expecting. It made me embarrassed to have said such a stupid thing. We came out of the smoke and the forest was fading away. In front of us was a cliff and I had no idea what was below it. 'We are going to jump.'

Jumping from a cliff is something I had never ever done before. I highly doubt many people have. Well, unless they were planning on dying. I was a bookworm and this story wanted to change that. We jumped off the edge and dropped into the ocean below.

'The name is James. Welcome to the Lost World,' he said. As we floated in the cold ocean, I could see the plumes of black smoke covering the sky above the island. Docked far in the distance from us was a ship. 'Let's get going. I will fill you in with what I know once we are on board the ship.'

'Sarah,' I said.

'Huh.'

'It is my name,' I replied to his confusion. We swam towards the boat. I don't think a boat would be the right word to describe it, a galleon would be more like it. It had three masts, and each of the numerous sails were down.