

First time I met
MR MUFFLES



PERSEVERANCE CASTAWAY CHRONICLES

← ————  Memoirs of a Survivor  ———— →



 **PEARL OF THE SEAS**
Luxury Ocean Cruises



**JOIN US AND HAVE THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE
ON THIS JOURNEY TO PARADISE!**

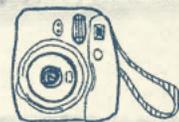

Seems like it's the journey of a lifetime
instead... not necessarily potato,
patato, but at least we're still in some
kind of paradise, I guess...



CHAPTER 1 AT SEA



DAY 1



Little brother, you know this trip has been on my bucket list forever! The **VIP** ticket was worth every overtime gig! First up—unpack. Then pictures from the sun deck. I'll be the girl with the **G&T** in one hand, and a **CAMERA** in the other! Yes!!!



DAY 2



Hello from the Caribbean! Nothing but blue skies and sunshine. I was trying to capture the light on the water all morning, except at breakfast when I met Phoenix (she's a sound technician for the cruise shows). We hung out all afternoon with her friends and I gotta admit, it's nice to have some company! I invited them to watch the **JULY 4TH** fireworks show from my balcony and see where the night leads together. Life is good!



BEST NIGHT EVER



zzz

DAY 3

zzz

Oh last night...after the fireworks, we crashed the official party and stayed until the last song. After everyone went back to their cabins, we talked for hours. It was one of those watching-the-night-sky-while-contemplating-the-meaning-of-life conversations. Shhh, Neal, if I can't gush to you, then who? The first raindrops of the morning chased us back to our cabins, too. Normally I'd love to take pictures of this gloomy weather, but I decided to sleep through the day and not feel bad about it. The ship is rocking more noticeably, so it's probably for the best to stay in. I hope the weather will be nicer tomorrow!

Note to self: Never mix your liquor...

←  CHAPTER 2 THE STORM  →

  DAY 4  



The emergency alarm woke me up, panicked and disoriented. Everything in my cabin was swinging around violently. The next second a sharp, crackling peal, followed by a loud crash shook the room and my window **EXPLODED**. I tried to remember where the muster station was while putting on my lifejacket. Suddenly, my cabin door swung open and a crew member screamed at me to follow him. I ran through endless corridors, bumping into other passengers, catching snatches of conversations about failed navigational systems and missing crew members. I don't know if we'll make it through the night.

I have no idea how this photo was shot... somehow it must have been that thunder, that broke my window... spooky!

Neal, Mom, I love you both. If you get this.





← ↗ !? CHAPTER 3 !? ↘ →
WHERE ARE WE?



DAY 5



I'm so grateful to be alive. The storm was monstrous. When the wind finally subsided, we were able to get a look at the main deck. The sunrise illuminated the absolute destruction of the ship's top deck. Strange plants and debris littered the pools, otherworldly elements for a getaway cruise. We were instructed to gather our belongings as the ship was heading towards a newly sighted landmass in the distance. I went back to my cabin, and salvaged some clothes and my camera bag. It was completely soaked, but everything in it was miraculously intact. As we were herded off the ship towards the island, I snapped some pictures of the shore. I swear some of the shapes on the beach were too colorful to be rocks, but everything is wrong about today. I can't say if I'm a good judge of weird right now.

I think it may have been the adrenaline and fear, but I could have sworn I heard a moan from deep within the ship's flooded aisles...but they were pushing us forward and I wanted to get out of there so badly.

Maybe it was just the noise of the hull crashing...

CHAPTER 4
WELCOME TO...

THE REST OF YOUR FREAKIN' LIFE...

DAY 6



The plants I am staring at look more otherworldly. I don't think exploring is the safest option, so I'm pretending to enjoy the sun!

I'm sitting on a sandy beach, the waves lapping at my ankles. The sun feels like it's past noon, and there's not a cloud in the tropical sky. We should be in paradise... instead we're in hell. As passengers disembark, the crew form the traditional line of checking out badges, and giving us the drill of when to return to the ship. It's a farce really, most of the technology we brought with us isn't working. I've checked all my cameras, and my phone...the only working one is a polaroid.



BOSS LADY

Chief Mate has taken over because the Captain is **MIA**. She's talking to the crew about how the constellations look unfamiliar... I hope she's as capable as she looks.

~~JANE WALDKAMP~~
~~ERIKA VELDKAMP~~
I'm going to have to learn a LOT of new names!

CHAPTER 5 THE ASSEMBLY

WE ARE SETTLING
DOWN!

Cruise life is abandoned. The warm towel station has been replaced with the fastest built field clinic I've ever seen, and my job has taken me to some intense situations, like that time I was photographing the wildfires in California. I want to believe a rescue is coming soon, but looking at the officer's faces... I know the truth, and the fear of it hits me unexpectedly. And when I get scared, I want to **DO** something!

Welcome to the **NWO**—we're not leaving this island. No rescue is coming. Our new leader made that announcement last night, and I am still in shock. She seems really smart, pulling together a group to form a Council from the staff on the ship, to delegate duties, like the start of a governing body. It makes sense with the potential chaos—even with her quick action, panic is setting in for a lot of vacationers. There was a huge fight about whether we should abandon the ship right away and build shelters or start training people to fight...whatever we come up against. The plan is to have four zones, Military first, then Sustenance and Fortification. It's a lot to take in.

Alejandro is my new life saver. He saw my sad face looking over my gear, and told me with my eye for detail, he could teach me how to draw instead. I'm not up for that right now, so he said he'll illustrate my book so you can see everything when I get home. Reporter Nora, still on the case!



Someone that positive, saying he's here to help look out for us passengers, organize the new settlement, help with recruitment...with anyone else it would sound like total bullshit, but with Dennis, you just know he's sincere.

— **DENNIS HARPER** —
is really cute, but we're not each other's type. ;)



◀ **DAY 7** ▶



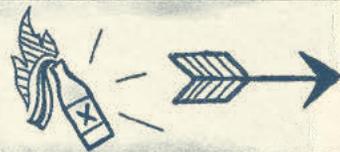
So we had to face the fact there was no rescue, and started the basics of a new society. Big day, right? That should be it, but it wasn't. Nope, we were given that information, and then these guys showed up and crashed the party.

ACTUAL. FREAKIN. DINOSAURS!!!

Oh I don't know if I'm terrified, devastated, or thrilled the most. I do know this, Neal—you would enjoy it so much. Miss you bro! :(



CHAPTER 6 WE ARE AT WAR



DAY 8



SCORPION KING

Starting the Military zone first was a good call. We had just started, when these giant scorpion things attacked us. If the pyromaniac (John? Jack? I have got to learn names faster) hadn't used the ship's booze to make Molotovs for the first recruits, we would have all been killed. I'm glad I didn't joke about it being a waste when he was making them! We retreated to the ship but as fast as it's sinking, we're going to have to keep building tomorrow. All I wanted was a vacation...

IT'S JACK.

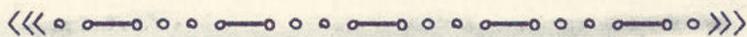
Get it together, brain.



THE GENERAL



TERRY ROSS worked security on the ship, but he must have been military before this. He's serious and holds strict camp discipline as personal creed. His manners will surely rub a lot of people the wrong way, but having him around will save lives. I think that's better than ever seeing him smile. I hope it is.



It's taken a lot of tense moments to get here, but we have a Military Zone. The Armory is pretty melee weapon heavy, but with some engineers and history enthusiasts among us, we've used what scrap we could salvage from the ship to make some pretty nasty weaponry. Mandatory training is not **ANYONE'S** favorite, but the loud complaints settle down whenever we have a new dino sighting. Everyone has a rotation daily to train, from guerilla style combat, to facilitating evacuation and first aid. Next shift is patrolling the perimeter to be on the lookout for any of our new neighbors headed our way. Then it's on to our other work like building a medical station, and a makeshift dining area. If that wasn't enough, I watch Pam when her mom is on her patrol shift. She's six and really sweet, so I don't mind at all, but I'm so exhausted at night, I might sleep through getting eaten, let alone having time to do the eating.

Not everyone thinks we're headed in the right direction. A few people are furious that they weren't chosen for the council, and have disagreed with every decision made so far. I think it's sour grapes, but either way, they are starting their own faction. I like competition, but I don't think now is the right time for it...



THE TROUBLEMAKERS



DAY 9



ALIEN VS.
SURVIVOR



Should be heading home today, but instead I took part in a dangerous expedition to save the remaining stockpile of food from the ship. We weren't the only ones on board scavenging, and we almost became the food! But we did end up getting a lot out of there before everything was submerged. Everything we could get was stored, and treated for long term use (if I ever see jerky again in my life it will be too soon, but I'm guessing that's not up for debate).



ADELITA

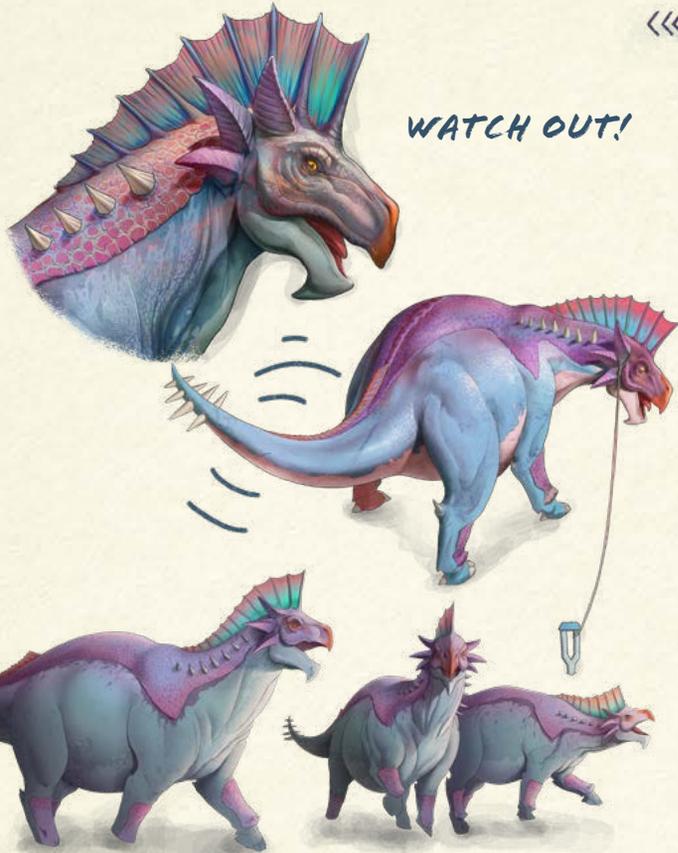


ADELITA, one of our elected Leaders, was the head Chef on the ship. She is a force of nature, and I would say a wizard with what she does to make our supplies appetizing. Really, I know it's science, and it's a good thing she seems to have an incredible background in the chemistry of food. She's definitely prevented a lot of people from dying even when they **DO** try the food best left alone.

I LOVE HER PET DINO!

He's a lil' guy we found, and she's testing out domestication on our herbivore friends. I'd love to have a pet too! I've been leaving my scraps for a new friend but it's one of the ones we observe eating fruit...and it keeps visiting me, so we'll see...

CHAPTER 8
THE WILDLIFE #1



WATCH OUT!

TRAMPLER

This big guy may look like a sweetie, but I wouldn't mistake him for a cow. They seem similar in temperament, but so much bigger in scale— an accidental nudge could be fatal! And since they move in a herd, they can trample and destroy us in a matter of minutes. I know a few folks here who think risking it for a small herd would be beneficial...but not until we get bigger fences! I don't see anyone volunteering to milk them, so the debate seems ridiculous to me.



MORNING
BASILISK

We named it after the mythological beast, and because our wake up call comes from these rooster lizards! It's amazing seeing the missing link. I know paleontologists would cry for joy if they had the opportunity to see them, but I just cry because I can never sleep in. I know you'd be laughing Neal, but you are the morning person of the family.



HIGH
PITCHED
CALL



RAPTOR

The most terrifying dino we've seen so far are the raptors. They are apex predators, who hunt in a pack. We've lost a few people and we've all become sensitive to listen for their high pitched call. The few surviving guinea pigs are quite sensitive to the Raptors' sounds, their upset behavior can usually predict incoming Raptor attacks. The stuff of nightmares, really. I worry for my little friend. Yes I have been feeding him still, and have named him Mr. Muffles. Don't judge, Neal!



Not only is she clever and amazing, **PHOENIX** is one of the best hunters we have. Her training and respect for wildlife is invaluable, and has kept us safe. And while it has occasionally provided us with food, she will not spill a drop of blood unless it's completely unavoidable.

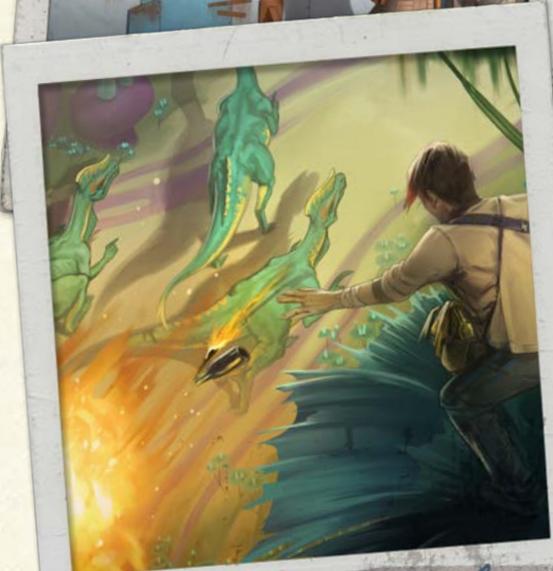


I adore her self confidence, and how she accepts who she is on her own terms.

CHAPTER 9 WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!!!



We're not home, not even close. And I know that, but it's hard not to try to find a way to interact with the animals. Feeding them was probably a mistake, because a herd of Trampers came through the camp today. They weren't looking to attack, in fact Adelita thinks they were running from a predator, but as big as they are they did a lot of damage... and there were casualties. We tried to lure them back out without any bloodshed. Well most of us did, but some people were angry. And some... well I worry that a taste of this new world and freedom from society has left some people wanting to embrace the chaos.



I hate to say it... I'm even a little afraid to say it, so I'm just telling you Neal. I think the Trampler stampede was because of Jack. He went out to "hunt" the Raptors using molotovs and smoke bombs. I think he upset the whole ecosystem. His impulsiveness and need for destruction could get us all killed.





SLEEP TIGHT

Our testing process in the mess hall is paying off. They developed a tranquilizer, which helped slow down the herd of Trampers. It wasn't perfect, but it did help. We should probably save them for the Raptors though...



JACK

I remember when I didn't even know his name, and I wish that was still true. I think he's dangerous. As if it wasn't enough with all the dinosaurs around. OK, I may be a little upset right now to be fair. He's also very good in an emergency, I'll give him that, I just wish he didn't keep looking for them sometimes.

Look at his fancy tent...



CHAPTER 10 THE WALL



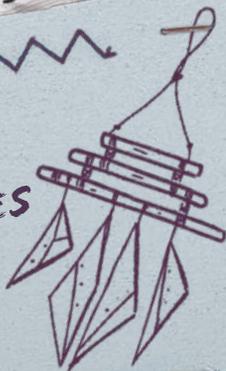
DAY 28



After the herd came through, it was clear we needed to build stronger protection. The barriers and traps we've built were not enough, so the construction for a massive wall around the settlement has already begun, even as we clear out the damage from the Trampers, and rebuild what they destroyed.

We have stepped up our salvage trips to the cruise ship to salvage as much as we can to construct the wall. The metal bulkheads, which are bolted and welded into place are incredibly difficult to remove, but each one helps stabilize the foundation of the wall, which is made mostly of felled trees, sharpened to a point and cross braced with additional logs and sheet metal from the ship. Even more logs placed at 45 degree angles reinforce it from a head on collision. To deter that, there is a spike pit on the exterior of the wall, and even chimes made from the scraps of metal left over in the hopes that the noise will scare away most of the animals on the island. They sound like the strangest of wind chimes.

WIND
CHIMES





CHIEF ENGINEER

Sarah Williams is a key part of our settlement coming together. She was the Chief Engineer on the ship, which has helped us prioritize dismantling it, but also she has been invaluable in planning the layout of our new home. As reserved as she is, it was easy to overlook her as a leader here. Well, until she started barking orders on how to make this giant wall!

Switching from expertise in mechanical and electronic engineering to city planning is not the easiest thing to do. Her analytic brain is full of mysteries, that's for sure.



DAY ??



Kinda lost track of time... It's starting to feel like I've always lived here. But no matter how familiar, I can't ever relax. Last night was intense... Lums, fire, and night beasts. The wall is still not finished, and now it's clear there are threats from the sky that the wall won't protect us from... Great... At least I met **BUD**, who is as good in a fight as he is ridiculous at naming the wildlife.

We decided to keep the Gregorian calendar, and kinda agreed on what day it should be today (no one is completely sure). So I am going to try to keep to that from now on.

CHAPTER 11 FUN DAYS ARE OVER



KEONI
THE COOL GUY

I was scheduled to take a surfing lesson with him on the cruise, and he's said he'll keep that lesson once we get settled!

Being a native Hawaiian, I think he adapted to the climate the fastest. Being a surf instructor, he's pretty adept at being outdoors. I haven't heard him complain once, even though I know we've all had our moments of sadness, terror, and exhaustion.



SEP. 18

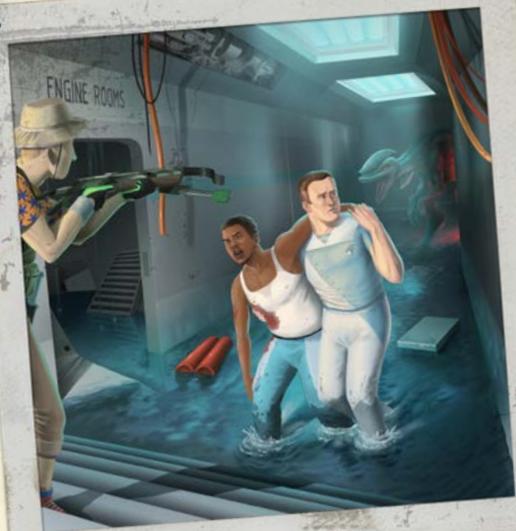


I've never been so scared in my life. And it wasn't for me! When I think about what could have happened to Pam. It was a Raptor, Neal. It got into the camp and headed right for our tent. It must have been lured here by the food I prepared for Mr. Muffles. How naive can I be? When I heard it right outside, I got her into our storage crate to hide, but I was frozen. I couldn't leave her and run away, I couldn't fight. If the patrol hadn't come in when they did. I've been treating this like a grand adventure, pretending it would all be alright, we would still find a way home, and I would have a lifetime of reality shows to get interviewed. I can't think like that anymore. This is for real, lives are in danger, and there's nothing I can do to prevent it.





SEP. 19



I signed up for another salvage mission to the ship. The hope was that we could find the last of the food and medical supplies. Phoenix said I'm still in shock from that Raptor attack, but I insisted on going. I think she's worried I was looking for an easy way out of this hellhole, but I just wanted to feel like I could make a difference. We got to the lowest decks, partly submerged in water, and kept hearing a banging sound. We wondered what machine could still be working to clang so regularly, but then we realized it was a survivor. It was the captain, barely hanging on to consciousness, with broken ribs and starved.

I heard him when we were leaving the ship and never said anything! I never even told anyone! I wanted to believe it was my imagination, but really I was only thinking of myself! How could we leave him here to rot for months? We didn't even try to look and we've been on the ship so many times...then the Raptor attacked, and we barely made it back to the camp. I thought the ship would be safer, I thought I could help, and I was so wrong.

I've let down so many people, I thought I could handle this, but I can't. I don't know if this diary makes any sense. I don't know if anything makes any sense. I'm sorry Neal, I think this may be my last entry for awhile... Love you!

←  CHAPTER 12  →



Our mission to capture a **SHIELDHEAD** has been a success! The risk has paid off, this is a pivotal moment for the colony.

I cannot express how excited I am. The Shieldhead we caught is awe inspiring. Bud may have named the species, but I named him **SISSEN**, because of the sound he makes as he breathes. Despite my joking, he's not domesticated, so we'll let him go once he uses his amazing olfactory senses to sniff out the Glowberry trees for us.



IT HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL FEW MONTHS!

Good to his word, Alejandro taught me to paint in the last couple of months. It helped me through the worst of my depression over being sick... I think I'm getting quite good at it, but you may judge from the piece on the previous page.





GLOWBERRY

GLOWBERRY TREE—shaped like an oversized grape, these berries have incredible properties of healing and elevated energy. They have been a scarcity to find so far, and we've used the harvests for helping heal a lot of sick and injured people. Not only that, it's better than 5 cups of coffee, and increases strength and stamina for a while too!



I have decided to resume writing after a long hiatus from my previous journaling. I stopped after the series of devastating raptor attacks. Like many here, I was not coping well and did not see the point of it. But another factor was that I got food poisoning and almost died.

My immune system could not cope with the local food supply, and if we had not found

the Glowberries when we did, that would have been it. They did not just give my strength back, but gave me a new purpose: I'm an adventurer seeking to uncover the mysteries of the island. This journal is going to be my witness testament for future generations to learn about our history.



CHAPTER 13
THE CITY #1



MAR. 4



A SYNOPSIS OF OCTOBER:

Once the Captain was strong enough to address the community, we had an assembly. The mess hall doubles as our gathering place, and many were in attendance. My guilt led me to volunteer for guard duty so that I did not have to be present, but instead listen and watch from the walls. Captain Wolfe thanked everyone for not giving up on him, and reminded us of how far we'd come in a short time. That, from his perspective, we had done the impossible in creating so much from nothing, and while the decisions were tough, we had carved out a space from nothing. Then he asked the name of the city. We were too busy surviving,

so we never named it, just called it the village, or the city. "Alright, then..." he said, and paused, looking over the crowd in contemplation, meeting each person's gaze. Then a smile brightened his face, and he continued, "We'll name it **PERSEVERANCE**, as ... we must persevere!" It still gives me goosebumps when I think about the cheer from the crowd. For months, we were living in fear and desperation – and that rush of optimism and happiness was euphoric. His survival was a miracle no one expected. It gave us hope for other miracles to happen.

PERSEVERANCE



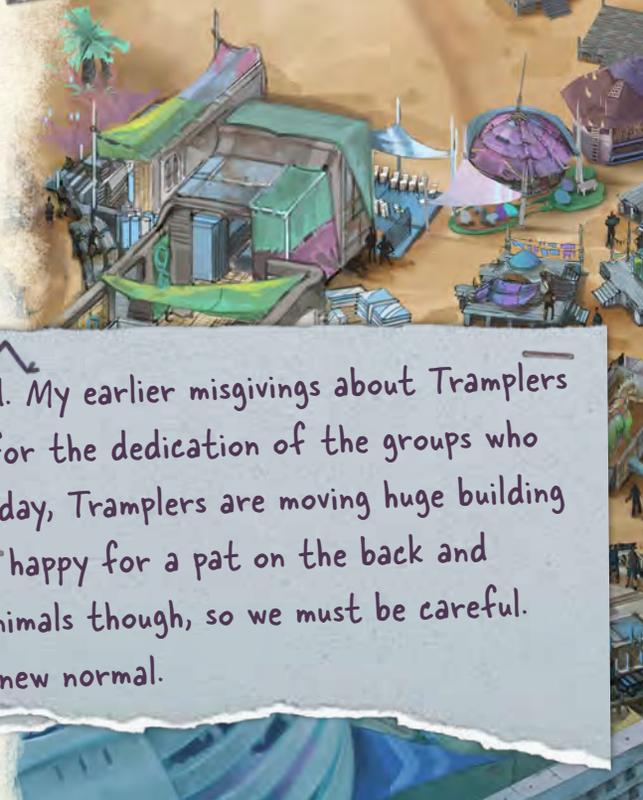
Once the wall was completed, we reassigned the Protection crew to Construction. The main function is twofold: to further develop Perseverance, and to expand our reach into the wilderness in a controlled approach. We started building Outposts and Camps in the wild, and Watchtowers to help protect them.



WATCHTOWER



CAMP



Our relationship with the dinosaurs has evolved. My earlier misgivings about Trampers were a product of fear, and thank goodness for the dedication of the groups who have worked with them. It's incredible, but today, Trampers are moving huge building blocks for a Watchtower into place. They are happy for a pat on the back and some snacks in exchange. They are still wild animals though, so we must be careful. Regardless, it is exhilarating that this is the new normal.

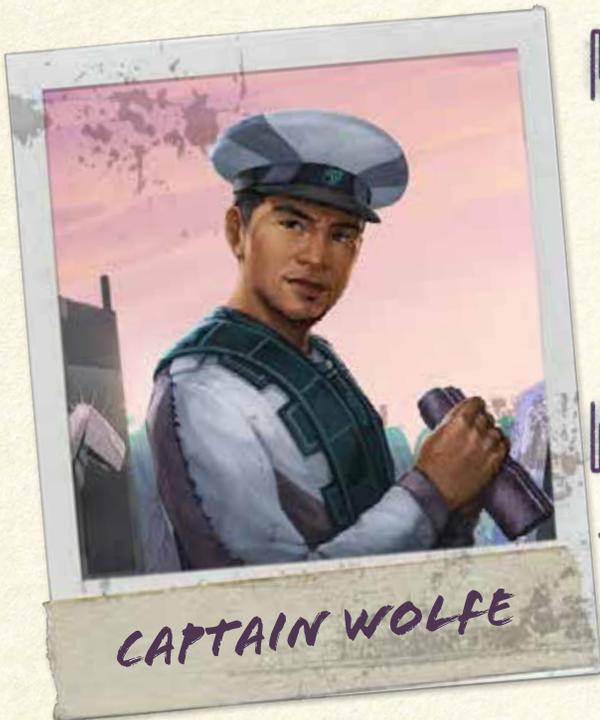


CHAPTER 14 THE NEW COUNCIL



With the Captain's return, the Council is stronger than ever. They are without a doubt, the leaders of our society, and their authority is supported by the people. With the regular Assembly and our Leaders representing different

groups' will, I think we managed to build a trustworthy government. Let's hope it stays that way. With these volatile times it is good to have consistency, but looking to the future, it will be interesting to see how it evolves.



CAPTAIN WOLFE

The very definition of a hero, he went down to the engine room to operate the flood gates and save as many lives as possible. And I left him to rot there for months. I know it was unintentional, but I still can't look him in the eye. Now that he is leading the explorations into the wild, I can't really avoid him...

He has suffered so much, and still chooses to project hope and determination.

CHAPTER 15 INTO THE WILD

We have drastically changed the landscape near Perseverance in only a few months. Pulling down the trees nearby has opened up the plateau at the foot of the mountain before it meets the rise to the summit. We have built paths into the canopy that lead to our outposts. The woods, once frightening and dark, is full of dozens of trees I now recognize.

My favorite moments here are walking past the wall, across this plane towards the forest. The warm breeze blows at our backs from the ocean, and the sound of the rustling of the trees lies ahead. I know so much more, and understand the danger within. I love the thrill of adventure each time we head out.



REAL LIFE TOWER DEFENSE



MARC. 15



The city is safeguarded from attacks, but the outposts are in constant danger. Keoni and I traveled to the Command Center to check in this morning. We were almost there, when we noticed the odd silence of the local fauna, that could only have meant one thing: Raptors! We started running, and reached the gate in one piece as a team on guard duty ran out to meet us, we turned to face

the Raptors, only meters behind. Once they would have attacked, but they've learned to be cautious. Hissing, the pair backed up slowly, craning their necks to see a way around the harpoon and axe held by the pair. Then they turned and ran back to the forest, three more joining the pack. I couldn't believe how close that was!

The birds of the island are as colorful as they are noisy. The Morning Basilisks are the largest (and loudest) of the bunch, but I've seen at least **30 DIFFERENT** species. Most have colorful plumage, and would fit in with parrots and macaws, but there are a variety. One is more like a bat, gliding without feathered wings. Another is more like a glider, with dark coloring on top that keeps it hidden in the trees. That one I saw climbing the trees with its front appendages, before opening them up to shockingly bright red plumage underneath, to carry itself to another tree dozens of meters away, alighting on a branch and scurrying off.



**MORNING
BASILISKS**

It seems that the Raptor problem is not going to be resolved any time soon. We found a baby raptor caught in one of our traps. We heard the high pitched calling and, thinking we finally had a chance to capture one and study it, a team went out to try and save it. We knew we'd have to be quick, but it wasn't fast enough. The pack of adult Raptors showed up, and we had to let it go just as we'd released it. I don't know if it will survive, as wounded as it was, but we do know that the pack protects its young. I guess that's learning something!



SOOOO CUTE!!!



MR. MUFFLES

It was my team's turn to spend a three-day tour at one of the watchtowers, and we drew the short straw at going to the one furthest out. It's halfway up the mountain, so we had to start just before dawn to make sure we got there during daylight. We were close when the TAMARIN attacked. They've come down near the camp to steal food sometimes, but I guess the raptors kept them away, while some stayed in the treetops, throwing rocks and sticks down at us, others came in and stole our supplies. One of them was Mr. Muffles! I called to him, and he turned back, knapsack hung over his shoulder to chatter back at me. I guess this is what I get for trying to turn a wild animal into a pet!



"YUCK!!!"

After the first night of sentry duty at the watchtower, we checked in the map to explore a new zone nearby. The area had much denser undergrowth, thanks to the nearby stream. We were taking our time because we thought this change in ecosystem would mean new critters, and boy were we right! I can recognize snakes, but that doesn't mean I was happy to see them. We were so caught up with avoiding them that we were practically on top of the plane before we saw it. It was surreal to see it here. It looks like it's from WW2, and from the overgrowth around it, I am amazed the jungle hadn't swallowed it up completely. This means others landed here too... What happened to them?

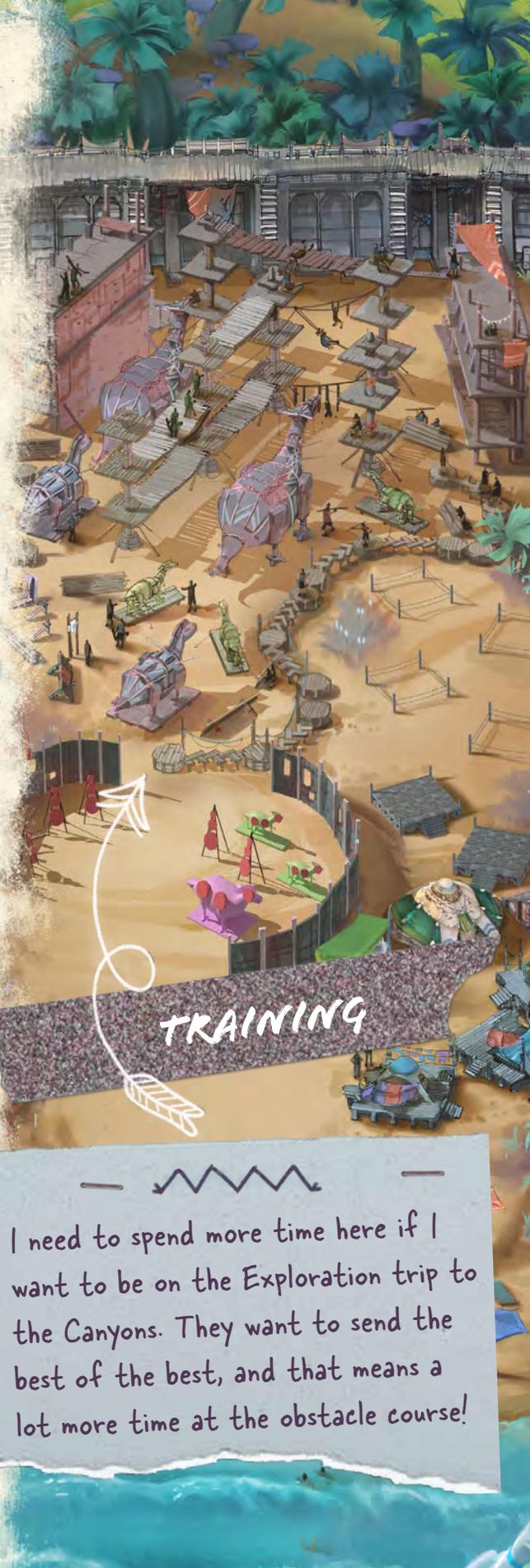


APR. 11



Every time I explore, it's as challenging as completing a triathlon, but I'm still full of energy afterwards. The chance to explore has given me a new purpose, and so after I've been in the city for a while, I get impatient to go out again. It's good to come back though, I still have some catching up on all the changes happening at Perseverance, and of course it gives me time to write it all down!

Thinking back to that first attack it's amazing to see how Keoni's team did an incredible job with the training area. There are life-size "dinosaurs" that look real enough to get the adrenaline pumping in your veins, and an extreme obstacle course to polish your skills and strengthen your body. Everyone still takes time to go through the training or give feedback about what we've seen in the field, to help Keoni create new practice techniques. You hear a lot less complaining about it these days. Everyone wants to be prepared!



TRAINING

I need to spend more time here if I want to be on the Exploration trip to the Canyons. They want to send the best of the best, and that means a lot more time at the obstacle course!

← →

CHAPTER 17 THE FIRST MAJOR

DISCOVERIES



APR. 29



EPIC DISCOVERY

#1

Bud, Dennis and I have returned! It took several days to cross the Plains; the tall grasses meant we dropped over the edge of a huge chasm dropping into the Canyon. Thankfully, we repelled down instead. We headed to the river that ran along the canyon floor. We noticed something on a cliff above us, so we decided to check it out. Climbing was treacherous thanks to the wet rock, and my arms were shaking by the time I pulled myself over the ridge, so when I looked around, I thought I was hallucinating. In front of us was a pirate

ship. After a moment of staring in confusion, I noticed it was rundown. The people who had landed here must have turned their ship into a home, much like us. Bud joked about our own Bermuda Triangle, but I wondered if some of those stories were true, thanks to everything that had happened to us. I know one of my ancestors had been a pirate lost at sea... according to my grandmother, so maybe this could have even been his ship! We took samples of the crystals in the area, and I made an inventory of all the items from the Pirate Lair. So much of it was crumbling from rot, but I did find a hidden cache in the floorboards of the captain's cabin. with a handful of gold coins. As we left, I pocketed one of them. I was not a historian, but hopefully someone would know if I found a doubloon, or the lost treasure of whatsits when we get back.



MAY. 7



EPIC DISCOVERY
#2



We decided to move further along the canyon since the cliff on the other side did not seem as steep. We walked for a time until we got to the beginning of the canyon floor. Lush vegetation gave way to a rocky scar traveling north towards the mountain top. We traveled along the ravine floor for some time. The high cliff walls blocked out most of the sunlight, and the temperature dropped. We reached a better climbing point, but even careful climbing we were all tired by now, which is why when Dennis slipped and crashed into Bud, we almost lost them both!

We reached the top and looked around to see how far off track we were to get home. In the early afternoon we saw something above the treeline. The spire looked ancient and crumbling. It was still far away, but I could tell it was made from stone. That meant someone here had built it. A building tall enough to be seen past the trees. Had people lived here that long? Were they still here? The trip to it would take almost no travel time, by this island's standards, but we were exhausted. Bud and Dennis were covered in cuts and bruises from the climb, and I worried they might get infected. On top of it all, I heard thunder, and looked up to see storm clouds rolling in. Fat drops of rain started pelting us a moment later, and we were soaked through within minutes. I split the last of the berries, and handed them some each. "We should go report this before re-discovering civilization," I sighed.

The team agreed and we headed home to report to the council.



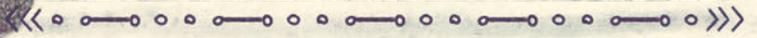
CHAPTER 18 THE CITY #3



POLITICS



I noticed building crews making dino cages in the city... they have the support of the Council, but it's still quite frightening to live so close to these mighty beasts (even Sissen).



We reported to the council and they are discussing our new discoveries! The market (yes, we have a market now) is buzzing with the talk about the canyon, the pirate spot, and the ancient ruins. It's been raining for days now, but the area is still crowded with shoppers. As I walk through, looking at everything being sold, a mix of new inventions and remnants of the old world. I don't want to go back to my sleeping quarters yet. Since we've returned, I've had nightmares about a trial, where I have to find an artifact. I can't solve the problem and I die over and over. I must be on edge about finding the ruins.



MAY. 10



The Council has decided to greenlight an extended exploration trip, and those bastards didn't choose me for the expedition! I was on the original team, have more experience than anyone except the team leaders, and I'm ready! They are going to descend, head to the waterfall

and explore the canyon without me! At least the weather is fitting for my mood; the rain hasn't let up once since our return. Screw them! And screw me... with a Screwdriver at the pub! (We ran out of Gin a while ago, so really it'll be whatever formula that's available from the still.) I hope Phoenix is free to hang out tonight. I need her company, as much as her insight.





SHIELDHEAD



The Shieldheads that live in the canyon are herbivores, who love Glowberries. On the one hand having them around can be useful for our harvesting, but they are just so massive in size. Sissen was still pretty young when we found her, so she was willing to let us feed and care for her at first. But clearly they are a solitary species, because she was determined to free herself pretty quickly. With that thick hide and tough head of hers, it was better to let her go.



I hope Sissen and Mr. Muffles are alright, I think both of them as my pets, even though I never wanted to keep them from being free just to please me.

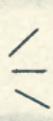


TAMARIN

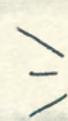


Mr Muffle is one of this species. They are bigger than the species we named them after, but have a lot of similarities in behavior, like stealing food when the opportunity arises, and working together to cause trouble! Unlike primates, they have colorful feathers, especially males.





JUN. 1



I feel like the weight of the world has been lifted. I knew the underlying reason I wasn't chosen for the expedition. There was a level of mistrust towards me, and it was my own behavior and avoiding the council which caused it. So I finally spoke to the Captain today. I told him how I let him down and he could have been rescued if I had spoken up when I heard the cries as we were leaving the ship. His eyes trained on me, while I could barely meet them, telling my tale, until suddenly he burst into laughter. I paused, confused, but the laughter went on and on, almost hysterically, until he had laughed himself out. I felt awkward and stupid, but after he was done, he hugged me. It was a deep, honest hug, and after some resistance, I allowed myself to hug him back, and

UNBELIEVABLE!

I cried like a baby. Once both of our emotional outbursts were over, he said he felt he needed to share a secret in turn so that we could start over from equal footing. And that is how I learned the name of the city was inspired by a sign he saw from the stage. While looking out from the podium that day he saw it: Pearl of the Seas: VIP Entrance. But that sign was covered with mud and some of the painting was missing too—so without the missing letters, it read:

~~PEARL OF THE SEAS:~~
VIP ENTRANCE

He made me swear not to tell anyone—but he didn't say anything about writing it down. For posterity. Either way, I hope confronting him will stop these nightmares I continue to have.



CHAPTER 20 RESCUE EXPEDITION



JUN. 14



Today the council called a group of us to join them and the officers together at the Adventure Hub. The canyon exploration party has failed to report in the last two weeks. The longest any team has been out of contact with either us or the outposts is a week. We could wait a little longer, but as I look at everyone's faces, I know we're all thinking the same thing—something must have happened to them. The council has decided we need to

organize a rescue expedition. I say nothing aloud, but I know I absolutely must be on the team.

If I had been assigned to go with the missing party, like I wanted, I could be dead by now. It's a chilling thought. I hope they are very much alive, and that we find them, along with more information about that civilization. Sleep escapes me and I am haunted by the missing faces of the expedition.



JUN. 16



Oh thank all the baby raptors, shining sun, and vorpal rifts that led me here! I'm in! We leave tomorrow! It's not all waterfalls and rainbows though—I'm not sure if I'll ever return, but I'm grateful for the

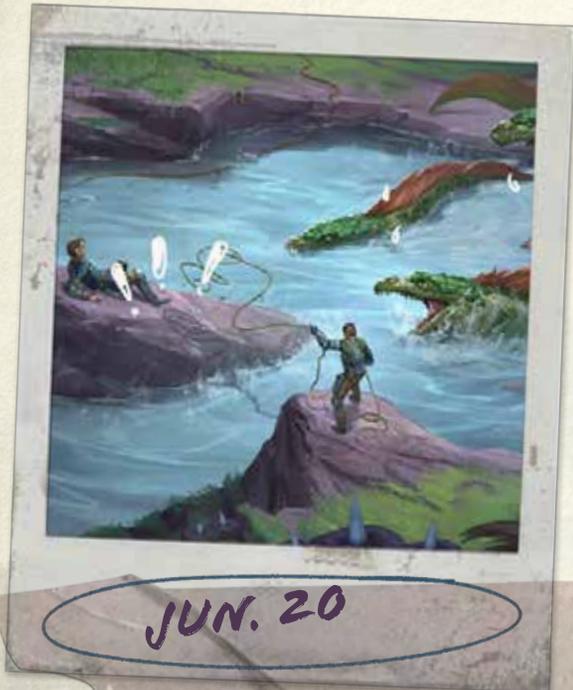
chance to prove myself. Even so, I'm taking the bottle of wine I saved for a special occasion to Phoenix's place tonight for a proper goodbye.



CHAPTER 21 FOLLOWING THE RIVER



My excitement at leaving faded quickly after today's events. We crossed the grasslands like the first time, but the rains caused the grass to grow taller than corn stalks; it took us twice as long. When we found the chasm, there was a massive rock slide. By the time we found a rock outcropping stable enough to repel down, it was much higher than before. Half way down we rested on a ledge. Bud saw that there was a nest full of giant eggs. He joked that just one would make an omelette for us all. Mommy was circling nearby, so we got out of there, but definitely no omelette.



Thanks to all the rain, the river is triple in size, and the current is dangerously fast. By now, it was expected so we had a plan to cross using rope. While the side on our end was secure, we had to rely on shooting the other end into a tree. I forged across, followed by Bud the fearless, then the others. As Sarah was mid-stream she screamed—a crock made its way towards her. The flooding river has made this area a good hunting ground for them. “Cut the rope!” I screamed to Sarah. She did, and the current pulled her down stream away from the crock. We hauled her to safety just in time!



GOT BITTEN

With all of our plans for an easy trek to the waterfall ruined we needed to regroup. Sarah had the planning acumen to insist we bring two inflatable boats with us for exploration along the river. Bud scouted ahead, and found an offshoot of the river that looked less challenging to raft. We started easily enough, but of course that lasted only a brief time. Soon the water sped up again and we were rafting in a rapids past a new waterfall. Something flew into the boat and I yelped from the shock, then screamed in earnest when it bit me. "Are you **KIDDING** me?" I yelled, "Piranhas!" Bud picked up his oar and went

to bat for us, calling to the other boat a warning. In the end it was piranhas - I, Bud - 23, Me - 0, and the boats were the real winners since they stayed afloat.



POOK TED :(

After a while the stream slowed down, and we set up camp. Sarah started a campfire, while we changed socks and put the wet ones out to dry. I decided it was time to get back at those piranhas and try some fishing, and Bud joined in, laughing at my ferocity. (Of course, he wasn't the one with a fish bite on his elbow.) It was a moment of tranquility just before the Raptors ambushed us! They came out from under a waterfall and caught one of the younger members of the party, a kid named Ted. He never saw them coming. Bud and I used the fishing spears to take it out while its attention was focused on attacking Ted. The rest

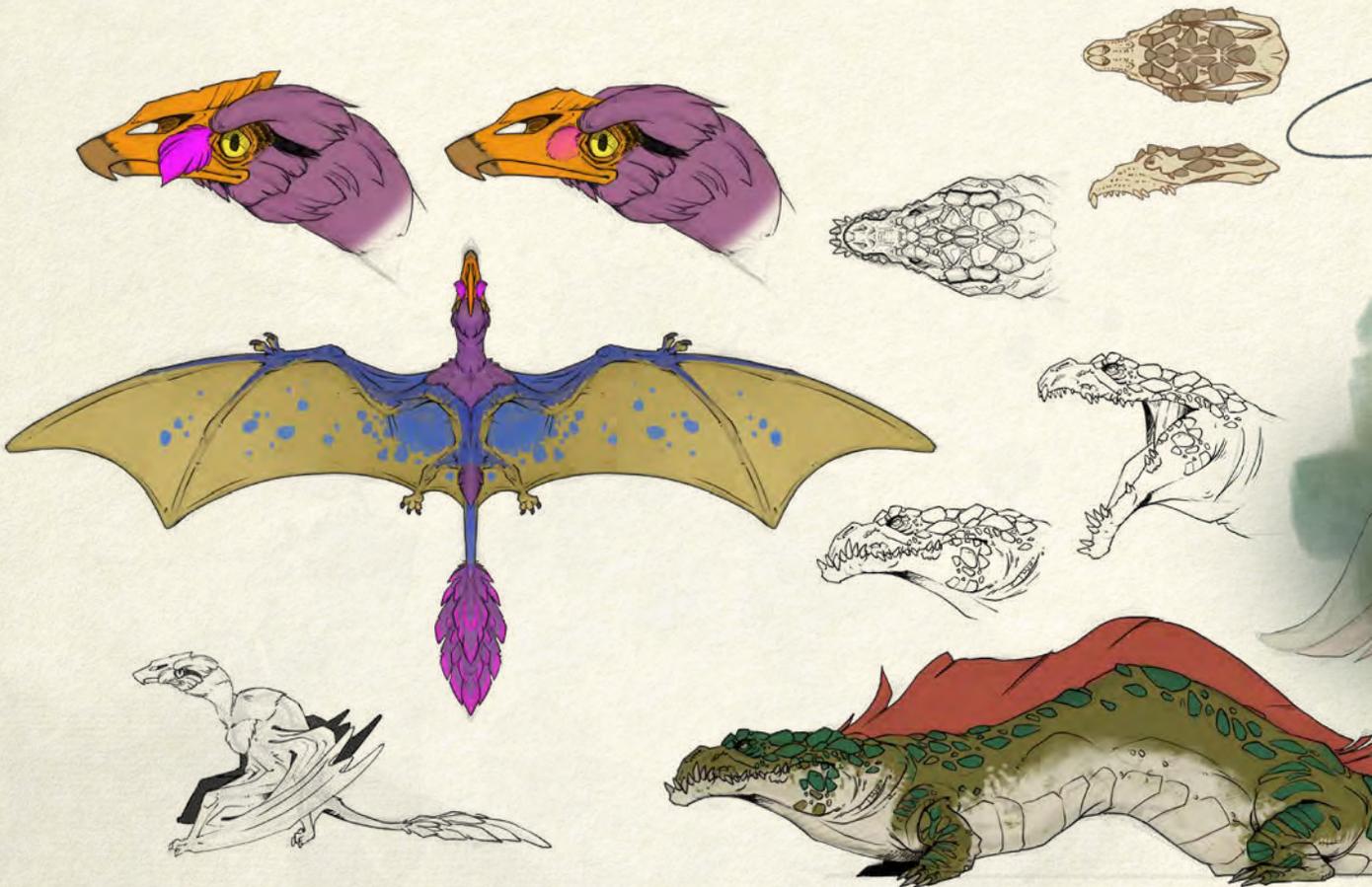
focused on the flanking Raptor. I am devastated at the loss, and so very afraid this is the same fate for the first exploration party.

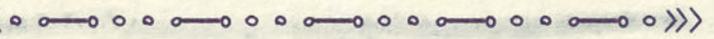
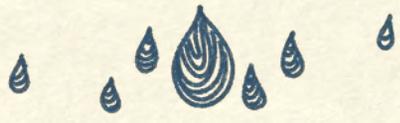
CHAPTER 22 THE WILDLIFE #3



Once again we don't have a scientist with us, only Bud, so we're naming this flyer the Eagle Dragon. Based on trying to steal her egg, it seems they have protective parenting instincts. While they are at least double the size of the apex birds I know, we appear to be on the large side to be their main prey.

(Thank goodness for that small favor!) I haven't seen them dive so I am not sure what is so plentiful here that they are hunting, but I have seen several circling overhead so there must be more nests along the cliff face. When their shadow passes over us, it's hard not to duck for cover.





BLOOD MONKEY

These creatures may be the Eagle Dragon's meal of choice! They were likely the ones throwing rocks at us from the cliff face. I know they have been following us as we travel this time, but they're never close enough to make out details. They seem pretty aggressive, so I don't think I would like a closer look.



JUN. 22

GATOR

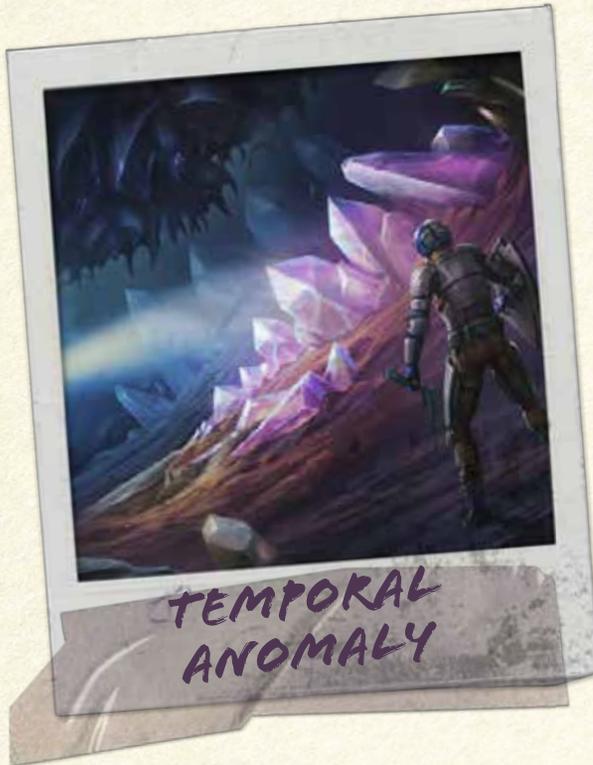
It's a curious adaptation: the mane on their back looks like a reed, which they use as camouflage to attack their prey (us). It's so similar to the "log" tactic alligators use, but well suited for this island. I admire their biological progression, but really am not in love with being on the receiving end. Their mouths have more of a snapping turtle shape, than the crocodile or alligator, but I bet it can also do plenty of damage.



CHAPTER 23 HORROR STORIES

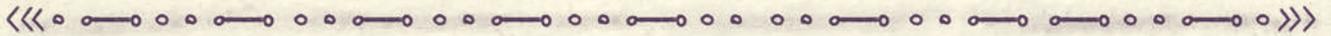
The Raptor attack wiped away so much of our resolve. We buried Ted, and chose to camp at the base of the waterfall. In the morning, Sarah woke us up with more disheartening news. The leg of the river we were traveling ended only a short way ahead. With the strong current

behind us, we would have to back track miles on foot to return to the fork we took. We could climb, but the cliff face here was crumbling and didn't seem safe. The best option was the passage under the waterfall where the Raptors came through.



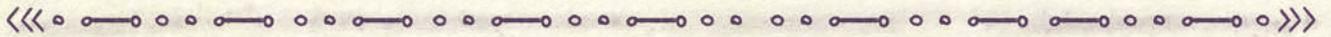
Moving across the slippery rocks, we pushed through the wall of water and found a stunning cave full of purple crystals. As we moved further in, we realized they emitted their own iridescent glow. We did not notice the huge bat-like creatures on the ceiling until Bud hollered "Echo!" The boom of his voice filled the cave, and then the roof was alive! With a screech they swooped down to attack. We ran and someone threw a grenade (likely of Jack's making). I looked at it arc up into the air, and then it exploded. The shockwave shattered the nearby crystals. Before I turned away, I saw something

that I can't describe any better than a temporal anomaly. For a moment, I saw ourselves entering the cave and staring at the crystals through a portal. I had no time to process what I was seeing before the impact threw me to the ground. Then Sarah was pulling me up to run down a passageway. The bats, scared off by the explosion, flew away. Soon I saw light, and we were back in the canyon.



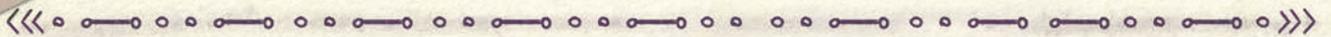
WATCH THOSE
CLAWS!

After a day of walking in the Canyon, the blood monkeys finally decided to attack. We had seen them jumping through the trees, but were hoping they would keep their distance. We thought we were prepared to fight, but there were more of them than we had thought. We had to run. Again. Not looking carefully we came to an incline, slid down a rocky slope, and fell into a pit.



MET ARAGOG
TODAY...

We have found the lost expedition! We were caught in a spider web as we fell into the pit, but thankfully Bud cut himself free, and lit a torch to burn away the webbing. The first party was trapped there. We burned away the cocoons they were entombed in, and used the fire to keep away the massive spiders as we climbed our way back out. I am so happy they are alive!



←   **CHAPTER 24**  **THE TEMPLE** → 

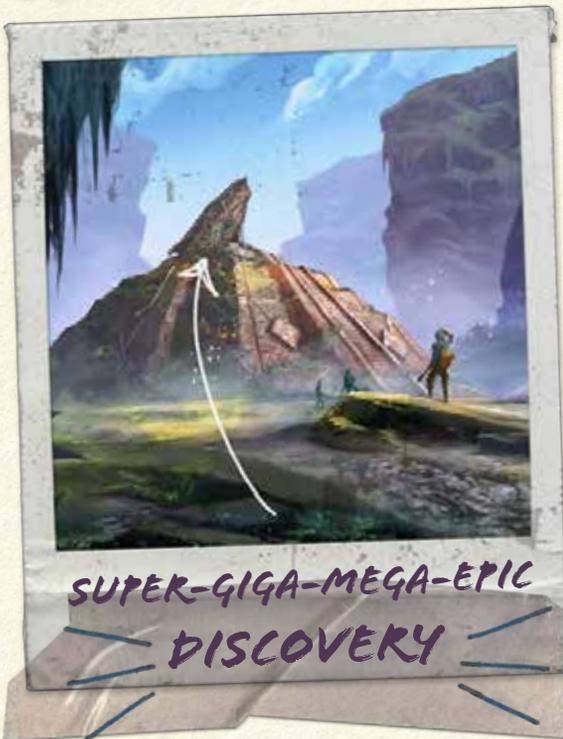


JUN. 26



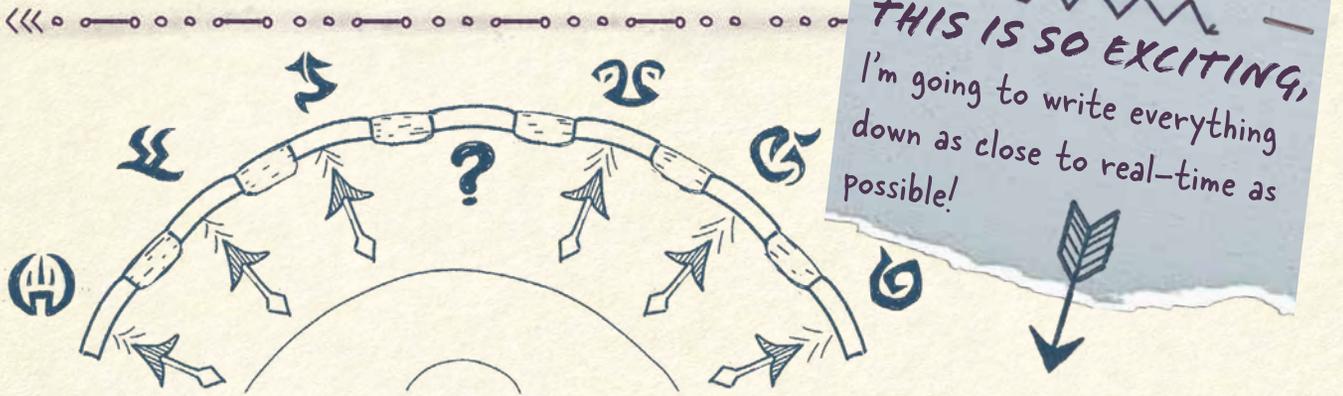
I am standing in an empty space. It is dark, but somehow I know I am deep within the earth, under a great temple. I have been here a hundred times, and know it will go on a hundred more, a thousand, if I cannot complete the trial. "Do you have it?" the question lingers in the air. I don't know who has asked it, or if it's my own thoughts. "Do you have the key?" The image of an artifact flashes in my memory.

I don't remember ever seeing it before, and yet it feels as familiar as my grandmother's apron, or the raft on the lake where my father taught me to swim when I was five. I reach deep in my memory, but the picture grows hazier the harder I try to focus on it. "She has failed again," sighs the unseen voice, and the darkness swallows me up in death. Again. And again.



Once again, I shuddered awake, sweating and close to tears. After a week of travel, with so many dangers and heartache, we reached the spire. The closer we'd come, the clearer my nightmares seemed. In the morning we cleared a path towards the spire. The thick underbrush gave way to our machetes to reveal a temple. The massive stone slabs must have been pulled from the mountain itself, and it looked like it went directly into the mountain at the back. The main entrance had collapsed, so we walked outside, looking for a way in.

The front was decorated with carvings of humans and dinosaurs working together. At the top, there was a skull of a Shieldhead, but it looked enormous. I realized it was a carved statue, and looked closer. "It's marble!" I marveled at the find. I was drawn to it and my fingers played over the eye socket. I felt a latch, and before I could think, I released it and the statue swung away, revealing a hole beneath it, with stone stairs headed down.

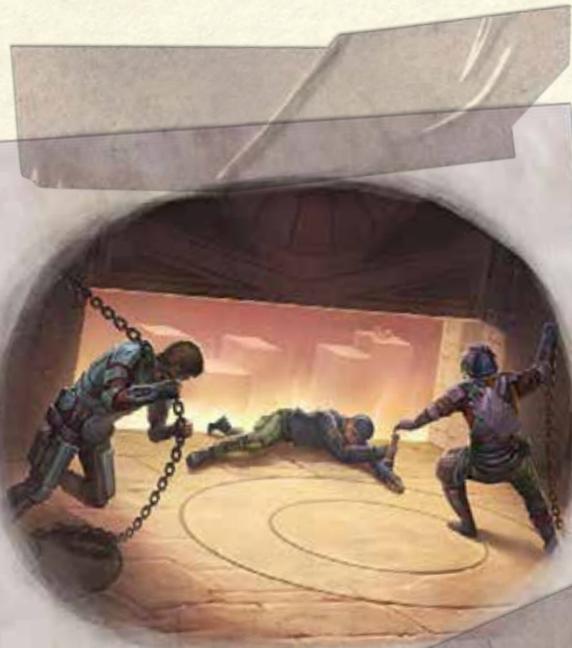


We descend to a chamber. The rock here was placed so cleverly, I could not see the seams. From this center hub, there were seven additional passageways. Across from our entrance lay a stone door closed shut, and the three on either side of the massive door were smaller, each one barred with a gate. Bud wandered over to one of the gates and tried to lift it, then shook his head. "This isn't budging. We're not gonna get anywhere." I walked over to him to help, thinking we may be able to leverage something underneath to pry it open. I yanked for a moment then sighed and raised my eyes to look at the rest of the gate. The symbol above it looked familiar. I looked closer, and then I was shaking and holding myself. "That's

it. That symbol...it's in my dreams. That symbol is part of it, I know it. I think I can open the gate." I looked at the symbol, fixing the image of the artifact in my mind, remembering it. The memory of it grew less hazy, and focused into a scroll. At that moment the door opened, like a magic trick. I looked back to Bud avoiding looking at the door, and then around at the team. "You had dreams too!" I said. Bud winced and nodded. "It's going to be ok. I know your dream told you you failed. And that you died. A lot." They all looked startled at that. "Yeah, me too. And we're not dead. So let's do this." I started to walk through, but Sarah put out her hand. "I think this first one is meant for me."



TRIAL OF STRENGTH



The next door that opened called to me, I moved forward Bud did too. Down the tunnel traveled, into the depths of the mountain. In front of us stood an archway, 4 times taller than us. Massive chains flanked a stone slab door. Bud shrugged and walked to one side, then gestured for me to take the other. I shook my head. "I have to go through." Painstakingly he pulled the chains to raise the heavy door. A blast of heat came from the other side. I looked through and saw slabs of rock, like stepping stones, emerging from a pit of fire. At the far end of the path was an altar. On it rested the scroll from my dream. I looked at Bud and said, "Be right back," and jumped.

The heat was overwhelming. I crouched down on the rock, as hot as a baking stone. I got a flash of my brother smiling, and realized I'd never see him again. I grit my teeth and jumped again. Now I was hiding from the Captain, ashamed that I could have saved him. Again I jumped. This time... it was Phoenix, and I didn't tell her how much she means to me. Each time I saw a new image of when I'd let people down. Each time I was reminded of when I'd quit. Each time I heard the voices from my dream, "She has failed again."

I was so close, I could see the altar in front of me; tears were streaming down my face. I jumped again, and I was at the altar. I grabbed the scroll, and the fires dimmed. I was no longer plagued by visions, but I was exhausted. I saw Bud's face holding the temple door open and realized he was too. I barely made it back. Bud reached over, straining to hold the chain, but lifted me through. "We did it kid," he said. And I laughed and cried, while hugging him and an alien artifact.



TRIAL OF EQUILIBRIUM



HELL OF AN ESCAPE ROOM TIMER

I rested while the next folks were called for the third trial. But when the fourth door opened. I felt that pull again. I entered with Robert, who grinned at me. We walked down a hall to a chamber with statues grouped in the middle of a tiled room. As we stepped in, the floor began to shift. I remembered trying to balance on a raft as a child and yelled, "Move to the middle!" We kept the floor from tilting, but I realized water was pouring into the chamber.

This was more like a raft than I realized. I looked over and Robert was staring at the floor. "It's like a chess board, but I think we have

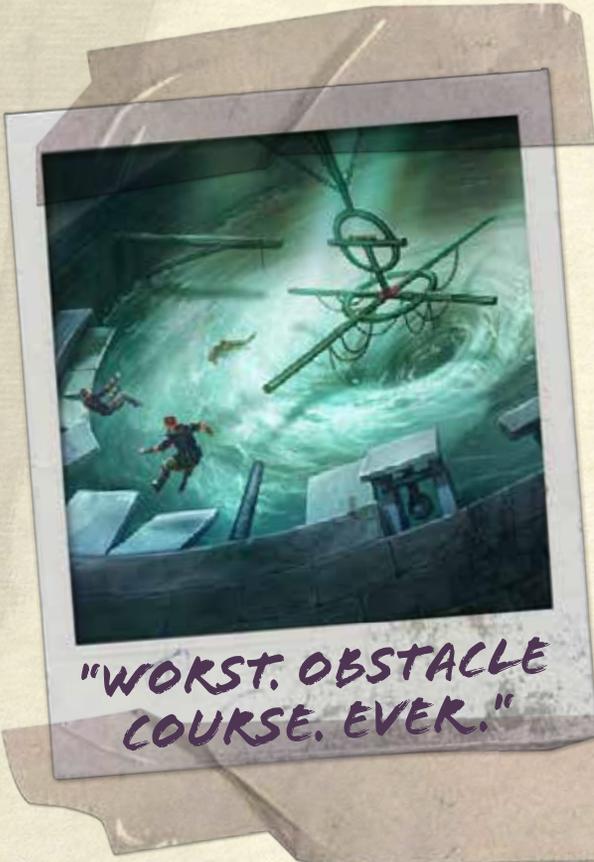
to shift the pieces at the same time. "To where?" I asked. He shrugged and said, "The edges?" I wanted to rush, but the heavy statues made the floor tilt if we went too quickly. Robert started humming. I recognized the song and joined in. The beat of the music helped us stay in step, and before the water was knee deep, we had the last statues in place. As we did the floor clicked into place, and the water started to drain. We walked to the far edges and collected the next scroll.

As we climbed I had time to think about my challenge. I could not have done it when I first arrived, I didn't have the strength... and that was it. I needed to prove that people can depend on me, and that doesn't have to be scary.

Keeping my balance in new situations, with new people. Staying calm, having equilibrium... I knew why this room called to me as well.



TRIAL OF PROFICIENCY



"WORST. OBSTACLE COURSE. EVER."

I was dry after waiting for the fifth trial to end, when the sixth door opened, and we realized we were all being called to enter. Inside the chamber was a pool, swirling in a vortex. Steps, hand holds, and levers lined the outside of the pool, with the scroll placed on a metal structure hanging over the vortex. "Worst. Obstacle course. Ever." I whispered to myself. We moved to the edge, trying to make our way to the landing that jutted towards the middle. It was terrifying! The steps would drop and reset, bars would rotate, and the center beam rotated—a moving target. I slipped and started swirling towards the center. Bud dove in after me, grabbing a chain to keep us both from being sucked down. I caught his arm and we pulled ourselves up. Sarah

called out "Can you hold on? We can make a person-bridge!" We linked together to get to the center, and she climbed down the length of us to reach the scroll.

I don't know if that was the best way to complete the trial, but thinking back on it, we showed how well we could work together and rely on each other.

**ENTERING THE HEART OF THE
TEMPLE...**



THE HEART OF
THE TEMPLE



THE MYSTERY
UNFOLDS

With all six scrolls, we turned to the final door, and were able to puzzle out the secret pressure pads on the door, to unlock it. We walked through to a passageway; the ceiling was at least two stories, and looked cleaner and more modern. I started to wonder if someone was playing at being an "ancient civilization". I had my reservations, but we moved on. The walls were covered in mosaics depicting warrior-like people, riding on dinosaurs. The details showed

weaponry that looked as much ancient as high tech to me. At the end of the corridor, the door had the outline of an obelisk. I started ~~to~~ step over debris to enter the chamber, when I noticed a harness lying on the ground like the one in the art. I lifted it up, and there was a headpiece, with a mouth bit. But also, there was a part that looked like a cap to go on a dinosaur's head. My mind filled with questions as we stepped forward to find the answers...

Here is the end of my first journal. I have so much more to tell, but our incredible discovery will take some time (and pages) to explain. I will write more in my next journal, as there is definitely more to discover on this island...



MY HEROES

As a final touch, I add this picture to my now complete diary before I move on to the next. **EXCITING!**