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English 411

Longer Story

Writer's Memo: This story is in the realm of realistic fiction, with a little suspense throughout. I still wanted to incorporate suspense into it because that is what I think is fun to write. A couple questions that I had is does the dialogue feel forced? I always second guess when I write how real people talk and then I can never figure it out because I overthink it. Also, are you interested the whole time or are there spots that are kind of boring/ dull? Did you think that the ending was built up enough?

Caspian

Grady and his family left the dock at dusk to start their 3 weeklong vacation away from the busy city of Miami, Florida. Traveling up and down the Caribbean coastline, stopping in gambling ports and tourist hubs, soaking in all of the sun that they could while living on the boat. It was a little houseboat, which they named the Black Pearl after their favorite movie, that the four of them take on their sailing vacations almost every year since the twins were 3. Oakley and Grace were 19 and finally home from college for winter break. Since they both went to school out of state in Oregon, they rarely came home to see their parents. Grady and his wife, Lucy, were too busy running around the city taking photos and reviewing popular tourist places that they never made it up to Oregon either. This was the first time since before they left for college in the summer that everyone was in one place again.

Grady and Lucy each took an active role in making sure that the ship was in top shape for their sea adventures over the next couple weeks. They packed the fridge with all sorts of snacks and grub for them all to munch on in between the dock and the port cities. They all sat around the table under the deck and ate dinner and played card games to make the time pass, the parents took turns sharing stories all started with "I remember when you were little" and the twins took

turns rolling their eyes at the most random, out of pocket things that would come out of their parent's mouths to finish that sentence. After a night full of laughter and full stomachs, they decided to call it in and go to sleep. Grady took the first watch to make sure that they got where they needed to while the night was thick.

Lucy was jolted awake when a loud crash hit the side of their boat. She clutched onto her blanket, put on her slippers, and ran up onto the main deck where Grady was battling a very strong wind and waves that could cause a surfer to be very excited. She ran to his aid, trying to hold the wheel while Grady messed with the buttons on the console. The waves were crashing up onto the deck of the Black Pearl and the side of the vessel crashed into the waves on either side. Grace and Oakley started to climb out onto the deck to see what all the commotion was about, but once Lucy saw them, she ran towards them and guided them back into the hull of the boat. The floor was coated in about an inch of standing water that rocked back and forth in sync with the sister waves outside. Lucy told the twins to stay in their rooms and to hold onto something, just like they raised them too if something, heaven forbid, ever were to happen.

Lucy started to make her way back up onto the deck of the boat when a huge wave overtook her and kept her from making it up the stairs. She fell back down into the hull and wiped the water off of her face. She rang out her nightgown like a dishrag and came back up onto the deck. She ran over to Grady to help him more with the wheel. The waves were getting bigger and angrier. Grady yelled to Lucy to go back down. She hesitated. He grabbed her by the arm, pulled her tight, and gave her a kiss. He mouthed the words "I love you" and then turned back to the wheel. Lucy ran out onto the deck and flooded down to the basement of the boat. Moments later, Grady stood face to face with a wave that would have capsized a small cruise ship.

The sun was high overhead a big ball of orange in the sky, and the sand was hot, like grains of sandpaper that stuck to your skin. Grady couldn't his eyes. He picked his head up off of the sand that it was laid on and could barely move. The backs of his arms were turned into red leather. He took his hands and rubbed them forcefully into his cheeks, leaving little red scratches, like he was blushing. He groaned more than anything. He managed to pull himself up so that he was sitting. Opening his eyes just a sliver, he could see that his leg was cut open, and the sandpaper and salt water was not helping his cause. He was about to lay back down onto the sand when he shot up.

"Lucy! Grace! Oakley!"

He called out for his family, when he got no answer, he called again, louder.

"LUCY GRACE OAKLEY!"

He scrambled to his feet and started to run, which quickly turned into a limp in any direction that he could go. Grady was running in circles, almost bewitched, screaming and crying out for his family.

"LUCY GRACE OAKLEYYYYY!"

He collapsed to the sand again and his vision went dark.

Grady peeled his eyes open again. Only a sliver of the sun was left now. It had been hours since he was last conscious.

"Dad"

There was a low whisper that made him sit up slightly, but then he heard it again.

“Dad, are you there?”

Grady jumped up. He winced in pain from his leg but that didn’t stop him from running towards the whisper. He needed to find his little girl, maybe his family was together on this beach, and he just had to find them. Grady ran, hobbling around and calling out for his family with no response. He came to a halt when he came across a small opening in the tree line of the beach. There were pieces of wreckage from the Black Pearl that had washed up onto shore. He walked over to the scattered pieces and when he was about to lose all hope, something caught his eye. A little locket in the sand that flashed and sparkled in the little sun that was left in the sky. It was Graces’. Grady went over to it and picked it up, holding it up to the sky.

“Hey, that’s mine.”

Grady turned, clutching the locket to his chest and turned to see Grace laying on the ground behind a washed-up crate, just out of sight. Grady quickly got up and scrambled to her. He gave her a hug that would squeeze the daylight out of any living thing, and they just sat like that for what felt like years, when Grady turned to Grace.

“Where are the others?”

She pointed to just inside the tree line. Grady got up and ran to where she was pointing. Oakley and Lucy sat leaning up against trees. He ran over to them and gave them the same type of hug that he gave Grace. He grabbed Lucy up and swept her off her feet. He kissed her lips and spun her around, just like they used to do when they met all those years ago.

“I love you, Lucy! I’m so happy that you’re alive. I was so scared.”

Grady started to tear up. Lucy raised a hand to his face and wiped away his tears that had escaped his eyes.

“I love you too, Grady.”

Grady set his wife back down on the ground and ran over to Oakley who was standing by the trees.

“Oh, son. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be, Dad. It’s not your fault.”

“I’m the one who insisted that we leave a day earlier to make it to the Dominican Republic by mid afternoon for the festival. I’m the one that got us into this mess.”

“We are all here now, together. That doesn’t matter anymore.”

Grady and his son grabbed each other and brought each other in for a big bear hug, patted each other on the back and then let go.

“Thank you, Son.”

All of a sudden, the wind picked up and a small gust blew into their little camp causing Grady to shiver.

“Let’s build ourselves a fire, huh?! This will be fun!”

Grady started to collect some wood that was scattered around the island on the beach. Some were pieces of the Black Pearl; others were driftwood and tree branches. His family sat around a little hole in the ground while he collected the wood and started throwing it in the little

pile. Luckily, he had a pack of matches in his pocket that had dried out in the sun that he was able to use to get a flame going. They all sat around the fire, trying to warm up.

“Dad, where are we?” Grace asked.

“I’m not sure, honey. It seems to be nothing out there for miles.”

Grady looked into the thickness of darkness that coated the sky. Only the moon and some speckled stars in the sky made it hard to tell where the sky stopped, and the ocean began. It felt like they were in a little bottle, floating, isolated from the rest of the world by glass. The four of them all laid down on the sand near the fire and looked up at the few stars that were up there. They exchanged some conversation before all drifting off to sleep for the night on the sand, just trying to stay warm.

The next morning, Grady was the first awake. He had moved over to Lucy in his sleep, clinging onto her warmth. He peeled himself off of her and stood up. Grace and Oakley were on the other side of the pit from them and were both still fast asleep. It was amazing how long those two could sleep, even when stranded on a dessert island. Grady made the executive decision to start building a shelter for them, since he wasn’t sure how long they would be stranded here for. They all used to watch the TV Survivor as a family when they were growing up, so this stranded on an island situation was made a little easier when he had Jeff Probst on his shoulder yelling encouraging things at him. After collecting some materials, he took a break and walked on the beach. He found a patch of black stones on the sand scattered around. He started to kick them around and then remembered that every single ‘stranded on an island’ movie that he watched growing up with his family. He needed to create an SOS signal with these rocks. It was destiny.

Grady made his way back to the area that they were calling home base, SOS signal in place just a little way away from them. His family were sitting around the pit when he got back. He started another fire with one of the few matches that he had left and sat next to Lucy, putting his arm around her.

“How did you guys’ sleep?”

“As good as anyone can in the sand on an island” Grace mumbled back at him.

“Well, I’ve got great news for you then, sweetie. I started making a shelter for us to sleep in, just like on Survivor! And you guys always said that you guys would vote me off because I wouldn’t do anything. Well, look at me now!”

Lucy gave Grady a hug.

“You did so good, Honey! Thank you.”

Grady kissed her on the forehead.

“Well, is anyone hungry? I know I am!”

“I am, Dad!” Oakley stood up. “Can I help you hunt?”

“Sure thing! You ladies stay here and keep warm, Oakley and I will be back with some breakfast for you.”

The pair took off into the tree line, finding sharp sticks along the way to use as makeshift spears. They crept along, trying to make as little noise as possible so that they don’t scare any of the potential meals off. They came into an opening in the dense tree line and in the middle sat a little rabbit eating some grass. Oakley pointed to it and turned to his dad. He nodded as a sign of ‘go ahead’ and Grady started to creep forward raising his spear high over his head. Oakley stayed

back in the tree line, hoping to not spook the animal away. Grady, in one swift motion, threw his spear and hit the rabbit. Oakley jumped up and down and was amazed by his dad's skill at hunting.

“How did you do that, Dad? Have you always known how to hunt?”

“Must be beginners' luck because I closed my eyes and had no idea where I was throwing this thing.”

They picked up the spear and rabbit and made their way back to their home base to bring breakfast back for the girls. They laughed and gawked at how good the throw was, even if it was going blind. The pair made it back into the clearing where they could see the camp from. Something seemed off, Grady could sense it. He yelled at Oakley to start running. They both sprinted as fast as they could back to the camp and found that the girls were being swarmed by big birds with long beaks, and from the looks of it, very hungry eyes. Grady gave the rabbit to Oakley and kept the spear, holding it high over his head in intimidation. He waved it around trying to scare the birds off and away from his family. The birds were fierce, they did not back down even at the sight of a pointy stick being waved at them. Had they known that Grady closed his eyes when he threw it last time and were testing their luck? One of the birds crept closer to Grace, inching its way step by step in the blind spot of Grady. Grace started to scream, and Grady turned to look. The bird had bitten some of Grace's arm off, a little chunk of skin. Grady grew furious and charged at the bird, scaring it away. He ran at the other birds that had started to swarm and they all followed suit with the first bird and took off. Even though they were birds and couldn't have human emotions, the birds seemed to look back at Grady and his family with aggression, like it would not be the last time they would be seeing each other.

Grady ran over to Grace and looked at her arm. It wasn't bleeding hardly at all, but it looked pretty gnarly. He held Grace in his arms and found some leaves nearby to wrap her arm in.

"It hardly hurts, Dad. I'll be okay."

Oakley tended to the fire to keep it alive and then built a little contraption that they could use to cook the rabbit with. They all helped make it. The first time they had all been doing something as a family since it felt like before the twins were in high school. They talked about how they got their lives filled do full of other things, that they never made time for each other. After talking and laughing over old family stories, just like the night of the wreck, they had full bellies and full hearts. They sat for the rest of the afternoon in the shaded tree line watching the sky, waiting for anything that could come and save them. Grady took it upon himself to go off and find dinner for them before it got dark. He found some berries and a coconut on the beach that he brought back. It wasn't as filling as lunch, but it did the trick. They all laid down in their newly made shelter and fell fast asleep under the stars and in the warm air of the island fire.

Something woke Grady up. It was warm and coming from above him. Heavy raindrops pelted down onto his face, and he sat up. He tried to look out onto the beach from the shelter, but it was too dark to see anything. The wind was howling around him, and he was blind until a crack of lightning broke the sky lighting up the beach front. He saw the storm creeping over the horizon and very dangerously close to where they were. Almost as fast as he realized this, the wind picked up and the rain started to get harder. He woke up his family and pulled them together under the shelter so that they could stay together. It was going to be a long night.

Two hours into the thunderstorm, all of them were shivering from cold. Goosebumps lined up and down their arms and warming themselves up could only last so long. Grady was wrapped around his family, holding them as tightly as they could reassuring them that they could get through this. He could feel that his family was cold as ice and their skin was starting to reflect that. From the lightning strikes, he could tell that they were turning shades of purple. The four of them embraced each other through the night, clinging and fighting to stay alive.

Grady woke up to the sun piercing his eyes, like they did the first day he was here. The sun after a storm is one bright sun of a bitch. The rest of his family laid next to him in the shelter in the same positions as they were in the storm. He got up and tried to find dry pieces of wood to start the fire back up. He was searching for any hint of warmth he could provide. He managed to get a small mouth going of a fire and he woke up the family and told them to move closer to the fire. He went out on the beach to find more wood and see if anything washed up from the storm. He wandered for a while, until something in the sky caught his eye. At first his heart sank into his stomach; the birds were back for revenge, and he didn't know if he had enough strength to fight them off this time and he wasn't sure if Grace had enough arm left for them to eat. But then his heart rose back up when he heard what it was. It sounded like a helicopter.

He started to shout and yell at the sky. Jumping and waving his arms around frantically, giving everything that he had left in his system to them being rescued. He continued to yell and jump when the helicopter seemed to see him and turned around from its path. Grady dropped everything and started to run back to home base. The helicopter crept closer and closer to the island. Grady yelled at his family and at the copter until it touched the sand of the island. It was a Coast Guard helicopter out looking for boats that had capsized during the storm the night before. Grady continued to jump around and rejoicing because he and his family were saved. The blades

of the helicopter continued to spin, and the side door opened up. One of the men got out and ran over to Grady.

“Sir, what is your name?”

“Grady- Grady Nelson. And my family Grace, Oakley, and Luci.”

“Okay sir, we are gonna take you home now.”

“Thank you! Thank you!”

The Coast Guard walked Grady over into the helicopter and went over to the camp where the rest of them were.

“Thank you! Thank you! We thought we were going to die out here.” Grady said to the captain.

The Coast Guard on the beach radioed back to the captain. He shook his head. Grady yelled over to his family and waved them into the helicopter.

“Guys, we are saved! Come on!” They did not move.

The Captain spoke into his radio. “THIS IS BLUE EAGLE-BLUE EAGLE-BLUE EAGLE WA1234 MAYDAY THIS IS BLUE EAGLE CAPE HENRY LIGHT BEARS 185 DEGREES MAGNETIC-DISTANCE 42 MILES STRANDED SURVIVORS NEED AMBULANCE 4 ADULTS 1 ALIVE AND THREE DEASEASED BODIES DECOMPOSED FOR AT LEAST 2 DAYS BLUE EAGLE IS BRINGING THEM HOME OVER”

Grady jumps out of the helicopter and runs over to his family. His vision becomes clear, and he drops to his knees. The corpses of his family sat slumped over the fire that he had made

earlier that morning. The Coast Guard helped Grady to his feet as he tried to run to the shell of his family. Flashes of the last 2 days come flashing back. He sees himself talking to his family's bodies and making them dinner, setting them up around the fire, going hunting with Oakley and his limp body draped over his shoulders. Grady's vision goes dark.

He wakes up in a hospital bed, hooked up to a bunch of IVs and in one of those shitty paper gowns. The fluorescent lights in his room were almost worse than the bright sun of the island. A nurse come into his room and is startled when Grady mumbles to her. She goes over and gets him to stop trying to sit up and get out of bed.

"You need to rest, Mr. Nelson."

"I need to see my family, where s my family?" Grady tried to push the nurse off of him and another nurse comes in and gives him a sedative. He lays back down onto the bed and then the nurse flips on the tv in the corner of his room.

"Just take it easy okay, Mr. Nelson."

Grady grunts and sits there in bed watching the news channel that the mean nurse flipped on. Plastered on the headlines is a story about a capsizing survivor who survived 2 days on an island before getting rescued. 3 dead. Grady eyes begin to water, and a stream of tears began to run down his cheeks.