

A Pirate's Choice

Lost and Alone

Reagan awoke to crispy skin and a gritty mouth. She opened her eyes, but the bright sun forced them shut. With her hands, Reagan could feel the sand. Her toes were wet and felt the tickle of waves.

"I must be on a beach." she thought. Reagan called out, "Hello? Mom? Dad?" There was no answer. She cracked her eyelids open, scanning the beach from end to end. She was most definitely alone.

Reagan pushed herself from the ground, dusting off the sand as she rose. Her head was pounding. Nearby there were bits of cloth, chunks of wood, and a few other random items from the boat.

Coming-of-Age

That's right, she remembered, her parents had taken her on an island adventure. A coming-of-age journey they called it.

"Every young girl, when she reaches the age of ten, must be taken to the Isle of Paradise." Reagan's mom had said.

"It's a tradition that's been followed for generations," her dad added.

Reagan didn't understand why her parents were taking her to some ancient island. All she cared about was a day off from school to spend lounging on the

beach. Now here she was, lying on a beach. It wasn't exactly as relaxing as she'd hoped.

Suddenly, Reagan heard a rustling sound. The bushes near the edge of the sand were shaking, but there was no breeze. Something was moving toward her, but what?

The Pirate Council

It wasn't a what after all, but a who. A young boy with hair past his shoulders and skin the color of toasted marshmallows rolled across the sand before standing up. His suddenly red cheeks gave away his embarrassment.

"Hi. I'm Jake." The boy walked closer to Reagan as he spoke. She didn't say a word.

"Sorry if I scared you. I tripped on a coconut coming down the path." Jake stared awkwardly at Reagan.

"I'm not going to hurt you if that's what you're worried about. The Council sent me over." He reached out and patted Reagan on the shoulder.

"Council? What Council? Where am I and where are my parents?" Reagan demanded answers with one hand on each hip.

"The Pirate Council of course. This is the Isle of Paradise; your parents brought you here to make your choice." Jake turned toward the bushes, motioning for Reagan to follow.

Reagan hesitated. This strange boy was talking about pirates and trying to lead her into the jungle. It didn't seem safe, or real for that matter.

"What choice have you got?" Jake called, eating the flesh of a coconut he had cracked open.

He had a point. "I'm lost, thirsty, hungry, overheated, and very likely dreaming. What do I have to lose," she thought. Reagan walked with her head held high toward the tree-line. Jake gave her some coconut. They walked in silence for several minutes. Reagan wanted to ask questions; she just couldn't decide which to ask first.

Choosing Day

There was a clearing in the trees ahead. Reagan could see a small group of people who looked much like Jake, only bigger. Jake led her to a seat in front of the other pirates.

"Welcome, young Reagan. Today is your Choosing Day," said a woman with braided hair held down under a brown tricorne hat.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know what that means," Reagan answered.

A man with a great white beard spoke up, "Every pirate gets a choice in whether or not to be a pirate. We don't go forcing it on anyone."

"But, where are my parents? And, why didn't they tell me about this?" Reagan stammered.

"Your parents know you're here, that's all you be needin' to know." yelled a man with a curly black mustache.

The woman with braided hair quickly added, "Your parents chose not to be pirates, but as part of our Code, they must give you a choice. They aren't allowed to sway you one way or another or else they forfeit their choice."

Reagan's Choice

Reagan had no clue what to do. She started to cry. The group of pirates sat and stared at her in disbelief. After a few minutes, her mom jumped out from behind a tree and pulled Reagan into a hug.

"You can choose whatever you like, we love you either way." her mom said.

Reagan looked to the Pirate Council. They were visibly angry. "Make your choice, child," they yelled in unison.

"I choose, I choose, not to choose! I'm only ten you know. How am I supposed to make a choice like this?" Reagan yelled back.

The Council members looked at each other with questioning eyes. There was a long silence. "Ain't no one ever chose that before, matey." said the curly mustache pirate. "I say, good enough for me. See you in ten years." Then he walked back into the jungle. The rest of the Council members shrugged their shoulders and followed him.

