

Disappointment Island - Alana Falbo
(Young Adult Fiction, First Place Winner)

Chapter 1

Mom and I love traveling, so we decided to take a trip to New Zealand. We heard it was beautiful! My mom used to tell me stories about the creatures that live on Disappointment Island to scare me! But in the end I knew it wasn't real. It was just a story to me but not my mom. She would always tell me it was real and she believed it. I thought she was crazy! But when we went to New Zealand, the stories became reality.

We were on our plane to New Zealand and I looked out the window to my right and saw an island with a wall around it. It was a decent sized island. It could fit about 20 houses or more. Mom turned to me and said "There's Disappointment Island!"

I laughed hoping she was joking, but she wasn't. The ladies on the plane brought around snacks and drinks. I chose ginger ale as always and mom got a fancy drink called a Bloody Mary. As I went to the bathroom, a lady said she liked my bright yellow sundress. I wanted to feel like those models that look like they're dancing in front of a big city. The bathrooms were cold and smelled a bit off. I washed my hands and headed back to my seat.

I looked around at all the different people. One lady had her noisy baby on her lap, another woman looked rich with a white blouse and big jewelry. In front of her, a man was definitely interested in the football game on the TV attached to the chair. One woman that seemed interesting to me had comfy overalls with cat socks on and her hair up in two pigtails like a little girl in second grade. A lot of people on the plane looked interesting. When I got to my seat the announcements finally came on:

"We are going to land soon, ladies and gents, so if you look up and see the seat belt sign on, please fasten your seat belt, we are heading to the edge of New Zealand. Have a great trip and safe travels!"

I was so excited, yet exhausted. As they were lowering the plane I got that sick feeling in my stomach. It was like the food in my stomach was rising up! Not a good feeling.

Chapter 2

Mom and I headed to our hotel in the city. It was all the things I imagined. Tall glass buildings, some more abstract than others. There was a huge bridge and lots of people, surprisingly. Our hotel felt like any hotel, chic yet comforting, a nice bathroom with a large shower and jacuzzi bath. As I jumped onto the bed, I sank and slowly drifted off to sleep.

The next morning I got ready to go on our first adventure. We waited a long time for our Uber as usual and ate some morning ice cream.

"Off we go skydiving!" Mom said with glee, I smiled and nodded my head.

"Are you scared"? Mom asked

"Of course not" I said in a soft voice.

I thought to myself, *"of course I'm scared, about ready to pee myself. I had never done it before, but lucky for mom she has!"* We got on the plane and slowly reached higher altitude, then the time came for me to just go for it.

As mom jumped she screamed with excitement but I on the other hand was crying inside. I managed and looked at the view after twisting and turning in the sky. It was actually really pretty and refreshing. A calm wave rushed over me as I took in the view.

After our adventure we went to eat. We arrived at this little diner called Muffins Cafe. It was really good. Their fries were the best and their burgers were juicy, just right. Anyway, our next adventure was the worst, this was the scariest moment ever for mom, our tour guide, and me.

As we woke up the next morning we headed to the boats and brought snacks just in case. We were heading to Auckland Island to see all types of birds and other wild animals. I could tell that our guide was either new or not good at his job. As we got closer to the island, I saw a tiny island to my left, Disappointment Island. It had that same stone wall all the way around it. I asked our tour guide what was on the other side of the wall and his response was useless.

After what felt like an extended boat ride, we docked. He suddenly said "I believe that we just docked at the wrong island, and we are low on fuel. Stay calm and I will try to contact someone. I turned around from looking at the ocean to see the big stone wall that was right beside us thirty minutes ago. We had docked at Disappointment Island.

Chapter 3

The tour guide, Gary, had a hard time contacting someone. I swear I could see him tearing up. I put my head on Mom's shoulder and asked "What's going to happen now?" Her response was "I'm not sure, Hon".

Around the walls it started to fog up like someone knew we were here. We all silently watched as the smoke rose and hovered over us.

"Do you hear that"? Mom said.

Gary and I looked around and something caught my eye in the water, what seemed like a big creature swimming under us. It looked like a whale but I didn't recall it being whale season around this time of year. The waves started to get intense and the boat started shaking back and forth constantly.

"Jump out!" says Gary.

Mom and I proceeded to jump out as fast as we could. As soon as we tried to grab our stuff out of the boat it had already sunk. We were stuck on an uninhabited island with no food, no shelter and a stranger.

"The only way we can get out of this now is to go to the other side of the island which means... going on the other side of the wall", Gary said frightened.

"What's on the other side?" I asked.

He said "I guess we'll find out".

We started heading to the entrance. Voices on the other side of the wall started forming in my head saying "Go" or "Turn around". I knew it was just me being a big scaredy cat, but was it my head or my thoughts or was it real?

I held Mom tightly as we walked through the entrance. It wasn't what I imagined. It was more like a forest. I could tell it was inhabited but it did have animals and a lot of bugs. I swear I could feel a spider climbing up my leg, so I ran in front of Mom. I'm from the city so I'm not the bug type. Even though I like traveling I still don't like nasty bugs that buzz around or bite or even crawl up my leg! Ughhhh!

Mom was quiet most of the time while we walked. I could see she was frightened but I held her hand to keep her comfortable with everything, which I wouldn't blame her for. We were stranded on an island Mom and I have been "obsessing" over. It started getting cold and dark, so we decided to camp out for a little bit. We had some gina berries for dinner, which were very sweet and tasty. They were purple and had little white seeds inside mixed with red jam.

It was hard to fall asleep with the chattering of insects and whispers I still hear in my head. I never went to sleep that night. I just thought about how we were going to make it. I could barely see the sky full of stars because of the trees hovering over me, but I could see a little bit of the moon. It was shining really bright which made it so I could see some of my surroundings. As the night went on, it started to lighten up and the temperature started to rise finally.

Mom woke up and started to scream. I quickly looked over and Gary was hanging from the tree by his feet staring right at me with his face all red and his stomach all ripped up. I quickly stopped breathing for a couple seconds. Mom ran to me and picked me up and started running. I went with it and started running and Mom stopped to take a breath. I was shaking, I was going crazy, my stomach started bursting with butterflies, I felt like I needed to throw up. I kept on thinking *what the heck just happened, I didn't hear anything, and I was awake the whole time staring at trees*. What was something that dangerous doing on a small island?

I ran to Mom and hugged her. We both started to cry.

"All we have to do is get to the other side of this island. You understand me? We run as far as we can 'til we reach the yellow rope. Passed there he said to be quiet and smooth. If you don't do those things then we are both dead, you understand? Ok, let's go run!" Mom said with a stern voice and look on her face.

We ran as fast as we could, the branches hitting my face one by one, the thorns scratching my arms, the voices getting louder and louder 'til they stopped, Mom stopped, I stopped. Mom put her arm in front of me. We saw the yellow rope. Across there was black on the tip of the leaves and roots of trees. We slowly walked looking around us for danger. The smell of oil surrounded us. We saw a cave ahead to our right and we kept walking slowly and slowly until Mom took that one step on a stick.

"**CRACK!**" The sound echoed farther away to where it found its way to the cave and we heard a big thud. We rushed to a tree and stood behind it so that whatever was in that cave didn't see us. Soon vines started heading towards our way at a fast speed. Mom yelled "Run left!" We so closely dodged the vines and ran straight to the water and before we could...

Chapter 4

I tripped and fell over a stone. I just laid there. Mom came over and lifted me off the ground. The vines were heading the opposite direction, so I had time to realize that I was lying on a trapdoor which led to an underground tunnel. I quickly moved aside to start digging. Under the dirt and moss, I found a handle bar that was rusted. I told Mom to get in and hurry. She nodded her head. I hopped in as well.

It was very dark and wet, kind of like a sewer. The smell of the cave smelt like dead rats. It was very cold and made that echo noise that tells you we are going to be walking for a long time. It was very obvious that the vines knew where we were going. Mom and I could hear the thunder-like noise from above us. We kept on walking and soon we could feel more than thunder. Mom shushed me as we stopped.

"Why did we stop?" I asked. Mom shushed me again.

"Shhhhhh."

The noise got louder like water was coming to us at a fast speed. A hole right behind me burst open. Great, I thought to myself, another problem on our hands! Holes, one by one spewing with water.

“RUN!” Mom yelled.

We started running with the sound of slush underneath our feet. As we were running, I started pushing my feet off the ground at a fast speed as if I was in a marathon. The water was racing to catch up with us, my fear of drowning clasp on to my body. Mom and I saw light showing through a crack at the end of the tunnel. The water was faster than me, so I tried to keep up with Mom.

As I ran, I felt the sudden urge to stop and take a breath. I closed my eyes and zoned out randomly and just stood there, then “BOOM” water engulfed me from behind hitting the air out of my lungs. My whole body was tumbling and rolling through the tunnel. Everything was happening so fast I didn’t react or do anything I just let the water take me away.

I couldn’t see anything until I saw light through my eyelids. I opened my eyes and there was a guy standing above me. Then I looked to my right and Mom was wrapped up in a blanket by a rescue boat. Did we make it? Is everything ok? Am I finally saved? Then I took a deep breath and it felt like I was choking on water. I realized that I was still racing through the tunnel. My head started pounding and my ears popped. This time I blacked out for real.

It felt warm around me. I went to stretch, and my body felt sore. I opened my eyes slightly to where I could see light and I was lying on sand again then I thought to myself I’m probably dreaming. I tried to look around, still unconscious. I found Mom laying there. I ran over to her.

“MOM!”

I yelled, and she woke up and we quickly hugged each other. We stood up and couldn’t believe what we saw, our faces in amazement. We didn’t know where we were. How did we go through a dramatic experience and end up in some fantasy? What kind of dream is this?