

THE PÁLMATRÉ CHRONICLES

VANISHED



Finally, our training is over. The three of us are officially ready for life on our own on Cat Cay. Yesterday Lydia showed us to our own hut that wasn't very different from Lydia's. She moved our beds and made up a cat-sized living room and kitchen for us. Instead of having Lydia's room, it was a room full of shelves and chests for storage. There were also extra weapons and even cat-sized armor. We had some of the best weapons and tools on the island.

Autumn still visits us sometimes, or we will see her occasionally while we are hunting in the jungle. All of us have been missing home recently. We have been wondering how are parents and siblings are doing, and if they know what happened to us.

One day we all decided that it was time to try to get back to Pálmatré. We told Lydia this, and she immediately decided to help us. She suggested breaking into the library to see if we could figure out how to get back. The next night we did that.

It was ten at night. The library was empty, and the only person left there was the librarian. We sneaked in just as she closed the door behind us and locked it. At least we were in, and we weren't going to worry about getting out until it was time to. We crept over to the maps section and pulled out a map of the world. It showed cat cay as a small dot in a vast curved section of islands labeled the Bahamas. Then I realized something. "Hey guys," I asked suddenly. "If we drifted here without us steering, then shouldn't we go in the direction that the current was coming from at that time?"

"You are BRILLIANT!" Esther exclaimed.

"Wait...." Frankie said slowly. "How will we know where the current was coming from then?"

"Here, let's look at the tide charts." I led them to another section and we took a look at the tide charts.

A few hours later, we had a plan and we felt confident.

We found the spare keys to the place and got out. Then, instead of going straight back to our hut, we headed to Lydia. We told her our plan. "We visited the library and came up with a plan," Esther explained. "We are giving ourselves a week to build a raft and gather supplies. We studied the tide charts, and at 3:00 pm on this day in a week, the tide would be going the opposite direction, so it'll carry us home. Luckily, our island is towards the direction that your hut is, so once we make the raft, we don't have to move it."

"Great. Let's get started!" Lydia led the way back to her cottage, and on the way we started collecting sticks and logs. We rolled the logs and Lydia carried the sticks. Autumn also pitched in, flying up to the trees and grabbing sticks and branches that were going to come off anyway. We took all of the sticks down to the beach near Lydia's cottage. We laid out the form of the raft, then we began to build it.

After six days, the raft had taken shape. We then had to gather food and water. Autumn and Lydia went off to find food for us from the village, and we went off as a trio to get water. We were given small barrels for collecting water from Lydia. We snuck into the village late that night. We went up to one of the water pumps and quickly filled the barrels. It was noisy, and we were pursued by a couple villagers on the way out. We quickly took to the trees, acting like monkeys and swinging from vine to vine while tossing the barrels to each other so we didn't drop them. The two men quickly gave up, and we returned to the ground. We went the rest of the way in peace.

The time for us to leave came quickly. It turned 3:00, and we hopped on the raft. Lydia pushed us off. She had given us a barrel of food, and it wasn't just any old food. It was full of all of our favorite foods.

The current carried us off. We were going surprisingly fast.

After a few hours, we began to get hungry. We ended up finding three rice crispy treats in the barrel. After we ate them, Esther and Frankie laid down and took a nap. I stayed on watch. Later, after I had gotten a few rests and had kept watch at least a few times, I was shaken awake by Esther.

"We're home!"

I looked ahead. Pálmatré loomed in the distance, a lush green island against the horizon.

"Frankie!" I shook him awake. "We're home!" We all sat on the raft, looking ahead in anxiety. As we sped towards the island, we were all so excited. We all thought the adventure was over and we could finally return to our families.

As the raft bumped the island, we all clambered off and raced to Esther's house, glad to be home.

The moment we stopped in front of the tiny cottage, we could immediately sense that something was wrong. We walked inside and we all gasped. The whole place was a wreck. The furniture was turned over, all of the tools were scattered on the floor, and Esther's parents and siblings were nowhere in sight.

"What happened?" Esther whispered, aghast.

"We have to go check our homes," Frankie said, sounding hollow. We all ran out of what used to be Esther's home and went to Frankie's house.

We met the same situation there. We went to my house next. It looked the same as the others.

Esther took a deep shaky breath. "So. What next?" Frankie and I glanced at her.

"For once, I have absolutely no idea," I stated.

Suddenly we heard a rustle from the back of my house.

"Lhasa? Frankie? What was that?"

Around the corner we could see the shadow of something moving towards us. We backed up cautiously.

Suddenly a tiny male Siamese kitten jumped out from around the corner.

"Lhasa! Frankie! Esther!"

My brother Henry ran up to me shaking.

"Henry!" I sighed, relieved. "What happened? Where are mom and dad?"

Henry looked at me with fear in his eyes. "A few days ago, these horrible people came. They had these huge slobbery animals with them that made loud noises and chased us everywhere. The taller creatures captured all of our parents and siblings and all of the cats on the island that they could find and get to. I hid in our hurricane shelter. They lifted the house, but they didn't see the door to the hurricane shelter. When I didn't hear anyone, I came out and everyone was gone."

Esther, Frankie and I looked at Henry for a long moment.

"How did they leave?" Esther inquired.

"They got into these huge wooden banana-shaped things with huge pieces of cloth on tree trunks mounted to it. I have no idea what they were. They put all of the cats in cages and then drifted away. I heard one of them say something about going to the mainland."

"These were called boats," Frankie concluded.

"But how would there be boats if there were only creatures on the island?"

Esther looked at us with realization dawning in her eyes. "It was the humans."