

The Remarkable Adventures of Charlotte Teproski

By: Mira Lu



1

It was another typical day in the New York Public Library, when the cool summer breeze flew through the windows, and the birds chirped happily, flying from here to there. The massive halls of the library welcomed the overflowing number of people into the cozy interior. Grand staircases led up to new floors, each room containing shelves full of neatly organised books. The library was filled with people of all ages - from toddlers, to kids, to teenagers, to adults, and even some elders. Some lay comfortably on a bean bag, clutching a book, some sat on desks industriously studying papers, while others walked from shelf to shelf, searching for a suitable book to spend the afternoon reading.



2



The majestic, luxurious Rose Main Reading Room was the largest room in the library. The ceiling was the main highlight, as it displayed celestial murals of vibrant skies and soft pink clouds. Rows and rows of tables sat high school and college students, and the room was filled with page turning and pen clicking sounds. Charlotte Teproski sat quietly at the very edge of the Rose Main Reading Room, gently flipping through the pages of her adventure favorite book series. She was a 12-year-old girl, with round black glasses and brown hair always tied into a braid. She had come to the library all by herself, just as how typical Saturdays went, as her mom passed away years ago, and her dad was busy at work. 10 minutes went by and Charlotte was already yawning. She put her book down and got up from her chair, walking towards the doors of the Rose Main Reading Room.



3



Just as Charlotte was about to step out of the door, a peculiar sight appeared. A strong beam of light shone through the door, shining up the whole room. Charlotte gasped with aghast. Her mouth hung open to scream, but no sound came out. Her whole body froze on the spot, unable to digest the extraordinary sight right in front of her face. Petrified, she turned around to see others' reactions to the supernatural. She took a glance of the reading room when all she saw was rows and rows of empty chairs. All the people sitting on it had disappeared in thin air! *How could this happen?* She thought in panic as she frantically ran around the room, breathing unevenly and searching for someone to help. To her great consternation, there was not another soul in the room except for Charlotte herself. Just seconds ago, the room was filled with people, either taking down books from shelves and sitting on the tables reading. Now, there was absolute silence, as if you could hear a pin drop. *What had just happened? And why am I the only one here now? Is my brain playing tricks on me? Maybe this is just a figment of my imagination? Terrific.* A million questions popped out of Charlotte's head as she pondered and bit her lips tightly. Glancing out the windows, her eyes widened and her face fell as she saw the streets were completely deserted.



4



Sighing with disappointment, Charlotte returned back to the great beam of light, which seemed to shine brighter and brighter. She hesitated whether to walk into it, or stay in the library for something perhaps tragic to happen. It was a difficult choice. It was seconds later when she got her immediate answer. The environment around her changed as three walls appeared at her back and sides, blocking her path to return to the Rose Main Reading Room. Charlotte had no choice but to step into the beam of light, and see what would lead her. She closed her eyes, bit her lips tightly, and tried to think of all the positive effects of going in. *What if it leads her to somewhere magical? Somewhere exciting? And eventually take her back home in peace?* Taking a deep breath, Charlotte put her left foot into the beam of light, and felt a platform underneath it. She trembled with fear as she cautiously put her right foot on it as well.



5



Gradually opening her eyes, Charlotte found that the entire world had changed. She was no longer at the library. She was nowhere in anything that resembled New York. Her heart pumped in the sight of pastel blue skies and clouds, all circling around her. Charlotte looked down and saw her black trainers standing on a transparent narrow platform. Looking forward in awe and fright, the bridge-like-path seemed endless, disappearing into the distant clouds.

Charlotte bashfully took another step on the fragile-looking path. As she looked back, to her great surprise, the path she covered had disappeared! *Oh great.* She thought with a hopeless sigh, *there's no option to return now.* Despite this, Charlotte decided to move on, and find out where the path would lead her to. Filled with curiosity but a little uneasiness, she walked along the narrow path, watching each and every step to not fall off from it. As far as Charlotte could see, the path still seemed never-ending, leading far and beyond Charlotte's sight.





Charlotte was sure she had walked for at least an hour, when her legs started to tire. Her legs hurt a little more as she moved on, but she ignored the slight pain. Charlotte came to a respite to catch her breath. She looked in front of her, surprisingly to see a neon sign hanging down from the sky. “There is a way to escape this place. If you have the courage and ability to do it, you can.” Charlotte stared at the sign blankly, reading the short note over and over again. There is, fortunately, a way out. Relieved, a part of Charlotte’s fears blew off into the distance as the determination and aspiration of succeeding came up upon her deepest soul.

She crossed the sign and continued on the path, with the message kept in her heart, giving her courage. She noticed that the light blue sky around her slowly turned darker and darker as time passed. *I have to make it to wherever this path is leading me to before dark,* Charlotte thought as she quickened her footsteps. She was almost running now, as she heard her trainers squeaking on the platform every step she took.

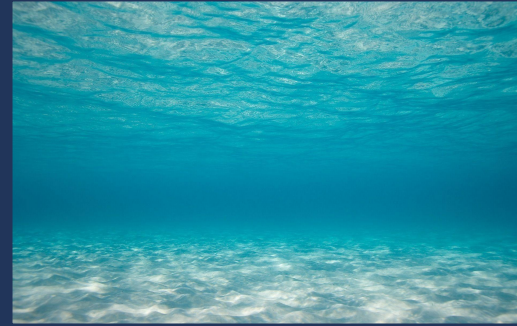


Suddenly, Charlotte felt the bottom of her left foot slip. Gasping, her body instantly fell off the narrow path. Grabbing the path tightly with her two hands, Charlotte managed to save herself from falling down. Her legs were dangling in the air as she tried her best to push herself up, back to the path. Beads of sweat were dripping down her face as she felt a strong feeling of regret. Had she chosen to walk slowly and steadily, she would not have ended up like this. Seconds passed by as Charlotte struggled to push herself up. The pain of her arms and hands rapidly increased, and her ability to hold on to her life decreased. Charlotte felt as if her whole body was feeling lighter and lighter, and started to shake. Swallowing, Charlotte attempted the last time, using the very last bit of strength and energy she had. Unfortunately, her right hand lost the grip onto the path, followed by her left hand, which were both covered with sweat.

Charlotte Teproski closed her eyes as she fell down the earth, ready for her unexpected death to arrive.....

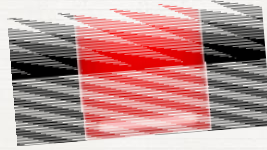
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Charlotte suddenly felt a gigantic “splash” sound as she felt sinking down into the water. She was extremely dizzy after the huge fall and was unable to follow up with what was happening. She slowly opened her eyes and found out that she wasn’t dead - the water had saved her life. She looked around her surroundings as she felt her body sinking down the water inch by inch. Charlotte was sure she was in the sea, but not a single marine creature came to sight. She sniffed her nose as the saltiness of the sea water came to her. Opening her eyes wide, Charlotte realized that she was actually able to *breathe*.



9






Landing both feet on the sand ground, Charlotte twitched with a little fright of where she was standing. How is she supposed to get out of here now? She looked up and found her eyeballs landing on a large, neon sign “The Kingdom of Aquatics”. She was standing at the bottom of the ocean, as she felt the sand tickling her toes. She raised an eyebrow as she desperately tried to look for more clues of where she was, and how she could leave this place. Looking down at her feet, she saw a large, red arrow drawn in the sand in front of her, disappearing off into the distance. *It might be the way out!* Charlotte thought as a smile spread across her face. Misreading the tiny words beside the arrows “Do **NOT** follow the arrow”, she waddled across the water, following the arrow signs without hesitation. After a while, Charlotte slowly stopped as she felt that something was unexpectedly *wrong*. The bright arrow signs sometimes pointed to the right, sometimes to the left, and sometimes to the front. What’s more, the surroundings around her seemed to get darker and darker as she followed the arrow signs. She smelled a scent of the sea water saltiness, with the sound of her movements. Charlotte felt a feeling of great uneasiness and began to worry where the arrows were *actually* leading her to.



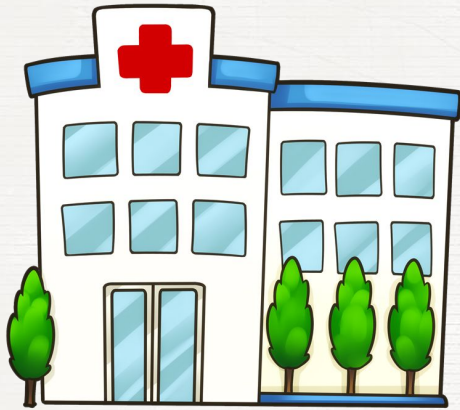
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**ROARRRRRRRRRRRR!**

Instantaneously, Charlotte froze like a statue. She felt a deep murmur sound echoing from a far distance. Shaking from head to toe, Charlotte was terrified to take another step anywhere. She clutched her rapidly pumping heart as she felt coldness coming up to her spine. Louder and louder the murmur went. Charlotte panicked as she looked around, not knowing what she should do. And just as she decided to go back... it was too late.

“ROARRRRRR!” came a loud, fierce sound behind her as she screamed a high pitched scream, turning her head around. In front of her confronted a large sized hairy creature, with bright blue fur, terrifying sharp claws and huge eyes full of power. It clearly seemed invincible. Charlotte was struck with great horror that her whole body twitches from left to right, backing away a few steps. She felt as if her heart was going to explode out of her chest as the monster raised one of his razor-sharp claws, eyes locked on the terrified face of Charlotte as he opened his wide mouth, dripping with saliva. It was as if the monster was about to devour Charlotte up within seconds. There was no way of turning back and no time to escape. Charlotte had no option but to stare blankly at the brawny monster and to wait for the arrival of her next expected death.

11



She covered her eyes tightly with her hands, counting her seconds to death when her mind suddenly drifted off into a tearful scene, many years ago.

The whole picture of that moment seemed to float out of her mind. White walls, white bed, white floors, white everything. Charlotte was only a small age of 6, when she stood beside her frail mother, who was lying nearly breathlessly on the hospital bed. How Charlotte felt huge lumps coming up from her throat, how her tears rolled down her cheeks as she watched her very own mother's last minutes of life. With a soft and delicate voice, her mother spoke with her last bit of energy. "Honey.....before I die....I just want....to say..to you.....re..remember always, your success in the future.....will be determined....by your own..fortitude.....Challenge yourself...and don't give up that...per..persever..ance..ce..... Her mother's voice got fainter and fainter and slowly receded away.

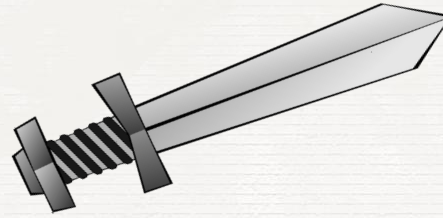


12

Charlotte felt as if she was her six-year-old self, standing beside her mother's bed, speechless as she watched her lose consciousness. Then, before she knew it, the huge tears came pouring down her face, just like how she reacted all those years ago. Charlotte locked her eyes on the scene and processed her mother's words in her mind, once again. Even though the monster was approaching forward bit by bit as seconds passed, she felt the sense of pluckiness rise up. The terrified feeling she had earlier had been wiped away.



13



“My success in the future.....”

The words floated in her mind as she looked around her surroundings to find anything that could come to use. To her luck, a rather sharp-looking sword lay half-buried on the sandy ground. Charlotte hurriedly went over, making a large distance between her and the monster. She brushed the bits of sand covering the sword’s surface and picked it up. It was rather heavy, but Charlotte held on to the small pain.

“Will be determined.....”

Charlotte clasped the sword tightly in her hands as she saw the monster coming towards her direction, as its footsteps landed loudly on the sand floor. “Bam, BAm, BaM, BAM!” Charlotte stared at the sand floor, quickly forming a plan in her mind as she backed away as much as she could, giving herself more time to think before the monster approached her. There clearly wasn’t much time left.

14



Oh no, what's plan B?

“By your own fortitude.....”

Charlotte once again ignored the fears that were coming up and made a firm decision: Run towards the monster and swing the sword over it with all her might, all her energy. She didn't know if it'll work.

“Challenge yourself.....”

Whether or not, she decided to give it a try. *If it'll not work*, Charlotte thought as she breathed unevenly, *What should I do, what's plan B? Oh no....* She saw a large shadow form on the sand floor and looked up. The monster was right in front of her now -- there was no time left to think.

CHALLENGE

15

PERSEVERANCE!

“And don’t give up on that....”

Charlotte panted as beads of sweat formed on her head. The water resistance was too heavy, so she could not back away. She had no choice but to do her initial plan. Twitching from head to toe, Charlotte shivered as she picked the sword up. Goose bumps came up from her spine as she trembled not just from cold, but also the intense fear she had. The shiny silver surface of the sword seems to *glow* under her eyes, giving her confidence.

3....2....1.....

“PERSEVERANCE!”

Charlotte brushed all her negative thoughts away and lifted the sword up high above her head. She glared at the monster not far away from her, with her face showing great vehemence and faith. Her eyebrows shot down and her eyes were open wide, full of energy. Charlotte clasped the sword tightly in her hand, ignoring the heavy weight. Her mind was repeating her mother’s last words again and again. Her heart was about to pump right out of her chest as she bit her lip tightly and gave herself a short countdown. “3....2....1.....”

16

BANG!

“Go.....” With all of her energy, Charlotte leaped directly towards the monster with all her might, lifted the sword higher up and ardourly swung. The sword smashed right through the monster’s neck. But it was not enough. Just a few drops of blood dripped down from the monster’s neck as he reached out his sharp claws, ready to fight back. Charlotte felt an intense wince of pain on her arm. Three long streaks of blood dripped down her arm. Despite the excruciating pain, Charlotte tried her best to ignore it and swung the sword right over the monster’s claws.

Over and over again, Charlotte swung repeatedly with great might, aiming at different body parts. Charlotte felt a small glimpse of joy as the monster’s claws no longer seemed fierce, and his whole body splattered with blood. The monster wobbled from side to side, no longer savage and having enough power for retaliation. Charlotte couldn’t believe her eyes as she heard a loud bang. The monster collapsed on the sand floor, losing consciousness.





17

A red stamp with the word "SUCCESS" in white capital letters. The stamp has a distressed, ink-like texture and is tilted slightly to the right.

Charlotte felt a feeling of success in her heart as she made a small smile. She, just a twelve-year-old young lady, had actually defeated a monster many times her size! She panted as she put down the sword, sweat dripping down her red and puffy face.

Her joy was replaced with more confusion the longer she stood on the sand. Now that the monster was out of her way, did that mean success? Did that mean she could go home and be her mother's proudest girl?

Charlotte felt the pumping of her heart freeze as her thoughts were immediately interrupted by something she never expected to happen.....

Turns out, the journey back home was far longer than Charlotte thought. In fact, all the violence and barbarity she experienced was just the very, very beginning.

BUT====

To be continued.....

