

# STRANDED

Darkness. Then flames. Screaming shouting, water foaming and splashes of people diving into water. Finally, explosions, the flames roaring all around the yacht and debris being catapulted into the black night. Eventually, the cries died down and the boat goes to the sandy ocean bed. Bodies were frantically clawing at the water until they gave up. Weak and needing rest, all the passengers waited through the night.

Land. A soft white beach occupied with nothing but three dazed shapes dragging themselves up the sandy shore into the shelter of leaning palm trees. Spluttering and coughing, three members from a disaster that happened just one night ago huddled in a circle. Max spoke first.

Age 19 the oldest of the group with dark toffee brown hair that dangles over his eyes or is swept across his face. He has a bright white smile and strong pure hazel eyes that can stare straight through you. He has the boldest personality out of the three but always puts others first while making a great team leader.



Noah is the most adventurous yet the youngest of the group (age 14) and has the most vibrant, bright, flaming orange hair cut short all round. He always knows how to put a smile on anyone's face while getting on with what he has to do. He agrees to nearly anything to please others going with nearly anything someone asks. Definitely the most helpful one.

Finally, Nathan, age 16 has the waviest sandy blonde hair any boy has ever had. He is probably the most creative one with a mind outside the box. He enjoys making things and has the dream of being the one who saves someone from disaster.

Quiet because of his hoarse croaky voice, Max tried to explain and make sense of everything that had happened in the past 24 hours. Making sure everyone was okay, Max got up and decided they needed to make a plan. The others hastily agreed. Apart from a few scrapes and bruises everyone was okay.

Here's what happened. Max gave the three boys a job each, he would go hunt and find food and water, Noah would get supplies and try find some society or other life that may be on the island and Nathan would create a suitable and safe shelter to stay in. That's how it worked, each of them going and doing their job. Despite being unsuccessful with finding food and water and finding other life of people they still managed to have a small cluster of sticks and branches that they could call home.

Morning, waking up on an empty belly with no food isn't the best feeling especially when a day before you found out you're stranded on a deserted tropical island. Luckily, Noah found a penknife on the shore inside a backpack that washed up on the shore that day, also there was a packet of protein bars and two bottles of water. Finding this, made the trio feel hope again but they realised they needed to salvage it. Max decided to go out looking for vines which carried water in, while Noah went out looking for more items to construct their shelter while being on the lookout for tribes or small villages. Things were starting to go to plan. Unable to find a stream Max did find many vines but could not store the water as he left the bottles with Nathan.

Just as Max came back, Noah came stumbling out of the trees with an armful of long branches and palm leaves. Nathan was lying exhausted on the sand dehydrated in the scorching heat with his face blistering up in the sun from the salt water like the others. Sweat pouring off the three of them, they decided to rest and help Nathan build their shelter.

Suddenly Noah spoke, "Have you noticed how hilly and mountainous this island is?" Max nodded his head realising how oddly steep uphill everything was.

"And how rocky everything is," continued Noah. Interrupting Max decided to call it a day. Taking a gulp of water each and splitting one protein bar between them they settled down for the night.

Day three, little did they know they were going to discover something completely terrifying. Once again, each of the three disappeared into the foliage doing their jobs. Max found a huge cluster of coconut trees and knocked several coconuts out of the tree and had brought them back to Nathan. Nathan brought a massive rock over to the hut to crack the coconuts later that day. Noah had been gone for a while. Max decided to go and get some water from the vines he spotted the other day while keeping a vigilant eye for Noah. After filling up his two bottles of water, Max was starting to get worried. He took a detour on the way back looking for Noah but couldn't find him. It was getting dark now and Max was getting worried but had no choice to go back to Nathan. When he came back Nathan had started a fire and Noah looked as pale as he had ever been. Max took a huge sigh of relief and Nathan did the same. Max didn't realise how long he had been gone for.

Then, Noah started explaining, his hairs pricked up on his neck. Huddling close to a fire created by a lighter inside the rucksack. Noah shivered and muttered something Max and Nathan could barely hear, but when they realised what he said, it was quite alarming. Despite the news, all three collapsed onto their make-shift beds and fell asleep.

Day four, although the boys had enough food and water now to last them a few more days they needed to get off the island as soon as possible. Never actually taking a proper look at the island, the three castaways retreated to the soft, calm waters lapping at their feet. Now being able to look at as much of the island as they can properly, the young survivors spotted something they wished was not real. Hopefully, they were hallucinating, but they weren't. Not very large but still there, ash clouds were filtering out the summit and centre of the island. This was bad.

Hurrying back to shore, Nathan muttered, "Volcano."

Instantly, Max realised they needed to get off the tropical not so paradise island. Max suddenly put together a plan barking out orders like a commanding officer, but even he knew that they wouldn't be ready in a day. The volcano just had to wait. Sprinting across the beach he and Noah set to work discussing a meeting time to be back at. Noah was going to retrieve all the vines and logs he could get his hands on while Max got supplies to last them on their trip. Nathan stayed back collecting all the palm leaves next to the entrance to the forest and laying out a plan to make a boat or raft. Max soon came back with armfuls of coconuts, water, and other tropical fruit. He laid them out on the beach and waited for Noah. But, it was at that moment something caught his eye and suddenly he was screaming and shouting and ordering Nathan to make a fire with all their wooden supplies. Nathan didn't understand and was about to protest but then he saw it too. A boat.

Max piled up all the wood they had while Nathan got the lighter. But, they were so frantic that they didn't see the crack in it so while it was tumbling between hands, all the gas was leaking out drip by drip onto the sand. By the time the lighter got into Max's hands everything had drained straight through the crack just like Max and Nathans hope as they realised what had happened. They just kept trying and trying but there was no fierce flame. At that moment, Noah came stumbling out of the green to see great despair on Max and Nathan's faces. In the distance Noah just gazed at the boat that was only a couple hundred metres from their rescue. All three of the boys decided to help Nathan construct their escape craft until they later went back out to scavenge for supplies. It was getting dark and more and more ash was billowing out of the great black crater. This was going to be a race against time. Eventually, the boys had no choice but to rest, leaving the final touches for the morning.



Day five. Ash was billowing in huge shadowy forms like an oversized chimney but even while this was going on Nathan was doing the last final touches to their life-line while the others were sleeping. He made a couple of fishing rods with what he had and adjusted the sail made of palm leaves. It was pretty impressive for a one-day build. Emerald green vines twirled and twisted as it was laced between the wood creating a solid secure structure. In the centre, the tall sail stood proud a solid log towering above Nathan's own head. The large sail shooting them across the water. This was it. Their last and final chance. If this doesn't work nothing will. Just everything has to go to plan. Hastily, Nathan woke the others up and

presented the finished product. Max and Noah just gazed and sat looking in awe.

At the same time all they said was, "Wow."

Getting up and brushing the sand off Max decided to help Nathan launch the raft for the first time which they named "Fortunata" which Noah said was Italian for lucky. It was now that they would discover if they would live or die.

Dragging the masterpiece across the sand into the water the elegant craft bobbed gently on the surface begging to be pulled by the breeze. Both boys sank to their knees both breathing multiple deep sighs of relief. Suddenly, they erupted into laughing and screaming happy tears rolling down their eyes as they hugged and jumped. Then, explosions much bigger and louder than the time their boat sank and then looking up they saw the molten lava flying towards them and dropping into the trees, starting massive fires. The volcano was erupting. The great monster of a mountain was now spitting huge amounts of fierce flying molten towards the three boys. Their cheers soon died down. With worry of the life-line catching fire they

brought it to the cover of the trees and wet the raft with salt water. Now putting the final supplies and items on their boat they ran to the sea with paddles in their hands and gritted teeth. One question was going through all their heads, will we make it?

Suddenly, Noah ran backwards shouting that he was getting the backpack, but at that moment an enormous flaming rock nearly as red as his hair landed at his feet and he thought that if he didn't turn back he might have been under it. He stood and gazed at it and so did the other boys asked if he was alright at the same time. Apart from a minor burn he was okay. He picked up the battered blue bag and chased Max and Nathan to the boat. Noah kicking at the back, the wind and currents pushing them forwards, and the swinging paddles going at full speed the boys were soon far away from the scene. But it wasn't all good. From the force of everything pushing them away from the island it was only a faint dot on the island and now they were completely lost at sea. Tired although it was only halfway through the day the boys were tired and needed rest. They didn't know how long they'd be floating adrift for, so they saved the water and took some milk from the coconuts instead. Taking it in turns to sleep Nathan and Noah slept first while Max piloted their handiwork.

It wasn't long until it grew dark, but the boys still had to take shifts as the night drew on and on. Although their cuts and scrapes weren't big or infected, the boys felt much more injured. Not knowing if they would see anybody they knew again feeling like they had lost everyone who were on the boat that caught fire wondering if they were still alive. Not expecting it, they hit a big wave nearly knocking Nathan who was sleeping off the raft. Suddenly, everyone woke up, hearts rattling and pounding against their chest. Luckily, it was just a single wave and not a storm starting.

Day six. Eventually, the sun started to climb up the wall of the horizon bringing the morning. Not long into the day, the three sun burnt bodies were getting bored of sitting on their raft doing nothing so decided to try fishing. After eating and taking a single refreshing mouthful of water they waited for hours with nothing on the line their coconut bait not working. Several more hours later into the early afternoon Nathan spotted something in the distance but didn't know what. Noah instantly screamed, "It's a boat! A real boat!" Not sure whether they were hallucinating as it drew closer, they still shouted but their throats were dry and hoarse hurting with every word they squealed. Without thinking Max launched a coconut into the water making it skim towards the passing sailing boat. Noah cried in protest complaining it's their only food put Max hauled another other his shoulder making it skim even further.

As the wind whipped the boys faces, the small sailing boat stopped. Then, as the boy's last bit of hope drained straight through them the boat began speeding towards them its sails a pale bleached white facing their raft. A wide toothy smile spread across each and every face of the three castaways who were set adrift. Frantically paddling towards the boat with speed they soon were only metres away. This was it. Are these their much-needed rescuers?



**By Conor**