

I couldn't get to sleep last night, so I went into my Dad's study to find a book. It always smells like old paper in there. I was looking through the shelves when I found an old, dusty book I'd never seen before. I blew all the dust off the dark green cover and saw shiny silver words: *Survival in the Forest*.

I thought it looked cool, so I sat down and opened it. But it was empty! Every single page was blank. I kept flicking through, confused, when suddenly the pages started turning all by themselves, super fast. A weird green light started glowing from the cover. The room started spinning like a rollercoaster, and I felt like I was floating up to the ceiling. Then, everything went completely white!

When I opened my eyes, I was lying on the ground in a forest. Two girls were looking down at me. "Are you okay?" one of them asked. They said their names were Maya and Lucy. I jumped up. "Where are we?" I asked. I was totally freaking out.

This forest was not normal. The trees had branches that looked like long arms, and the leaves glowed. There were birds that were every colour you could imagine. Then the ground started to shake: a creature that looked like a giraffe trotted past, but it was built like a sturdy draft horse! Moments later, a pair of lions, no bigger than house cats, stalked a beetle through the plants. Their tiny roars were like kittens' mews. As the earth shook further, a rhino as big as a dinosaur stomped past us. I was so scared I couldn't even move.

Maya told me not to worry. She said she had been here before. The book had pulled us into a seven-day survival challenge. If we made it, we could go home. But she said it wouldn't be easy, because new animals appeared every night. We had to find food and build a shelter.

Luckily, we found a box under a rock with tools like an axe and a rope. We spent all afternoon building a shelter out of branches and leaves. It was hard work! By the time we finished, it was getting dark. We decided it was safer to stay inside, even though we were really hungry.

That night was the scariest part. We heard all these weird noises outside. I peeked through a crack in our wall and saw giant spiders and ants the size of a car walking right past our shelter! I wanted to scream but I covered my mouth. We stayed as still as statues until they were gone.

The next day, we were starving. We found some awesome fruit, like orange grapes, blue strawberries, and watermelons shaped like stars. They were the most delicious things I've ever eaten. Maya knew which ones were safe. After we ate, we found a beautiful lake where the water actually glowed.

On the other side of the lake, we saw a baby elephant! It had pink skin and big, sad eyes. Its leg was stuck under a log and it was crying. We all rushed over to help. The three of us pushed the log with all our might until we freed her. We helped her back to our shelter and Maya put some special herbs on her leg to make it feel better.

The elephant woke us up the next morning by tickling our faces with her trunk. Her leg was all better! She was so happy, she started jumping around and playing. We decided we couldn't leave the forest until we found her family.

We searched for two whole days but couldn't find any other elephants. We were starting to lose hope. But then, we heard a faint trumpet sound coming from over some big hills. We knew we had to go, even if it meant we couldn't get back to our shelter by dark.

The climb was really hard and scary. The rocks were sharp and we kept slipping. After what felt like forever, we finally got to the top. And down below in a valley, we saw a whole herd of elephants! Our little elephant friend ran down the hill as fast as she could. Her mom came over and gave her a big hug with her trunk. It was the best thing I'd ever seen.

Suddenly, a big, friendly voice said, "Congratulations!" It told us we had passed the test by being kind, and now we could go home. A bright white light appeared, the world started spinning again, and then I was back in my Dad's study!

The book was clutched in my hands. The silver letters no longer shined. I opened it as my hands were trembling. The pages were no longer blank. The first page showed three girls standing before a glowing lake. And on the very last page, there was a single, perfect sketch of a baby elephant, safe beside its mother. This was our story!

Aadhya (aged 10)