



SURVIVAL

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The water had seeped in during the night.

She wasn't sure how it had got past the strips of rubber attached to the bottom of each door, but it didn't really matter. What mattered was the fact that there was a fairly large puddle stretching into the middle of her room. She tried to keep herself from worrying. In a few hours, she'd be out of the country. "And once we leave," her father had told her a few nights previously, "It's no longer our problem to worry about."

She was old enough to know how completely wrong that statement was. However, she'd also spent enough time with her father to know that arguing would be pointless. She still tried, back when the plan was just an idea, with no dates or destinations fixed.

"Think of it as survival of the fittest," her father had said near the end of his speech defending his proposal. "This place will be underwater in about two years. We have the means to save ourselves, and so we will."

"And leave the rest of the people in the country to do what? Die? Drown?"

"What would you do to help them? What can you do? If you stayed back, would it somehow help them survive?"

"I—no—we have the means to take some people with us..." even as the words left her mouth, she knew how

weak she sounded. Her thoughts were confirmed by her father's scoff.

"We're getting away from this dreadful country. I refuse to end up on the seabed."

And that was that.

She ignored the hurried knocks on her door as she dressed, moving around gingerly to keep her feet from getting wet. When the waters had first started to rise, she'd just been a toddler, too young to understand how dire the situation was. As she grew older, though, she realised that a world surrounded by water wasn't normal. He discovered that there was a time when the port city wasn't half underwater. When roads weren't submerged and entire neighborhoods weren't being abandoned every other month. But that time was long gone, because of the rising sea levels caused by climate change. Scientists and specialists from all over the world gave their advice on how to keep the sea from swallowing up the entire country, but where was the money or manpower for projects like that?

And so the rich and the able were leaving. Some were moving in with relatives who lived abroad; others were determined to struggle in completely new places. The ones who didn't have suitable bank balances, though, were left to their terrible fate.

Once she had changed into her clothes, she surveyed her room for the last time. The bed had been made up

quite hastily; the window next to it showed the streets full of puddles and mud. Her dresser was littered with makeup, but she wouldn't apply them today. It was the only way she could prove to the world that even though she was going, she wasn't happy about it. She'd thought it would hurt, to leave the only home she'd ever known and venture out into a world of great uncertainty. But as she walked out of her room and followed her parents out of the house, thoughts of the thousands of stranded people were the only ones circling her head.

The ride to the airport was short and silent. Even though their family vehicle was one of the handful that had been modified to resist water, their chauffeur was having a hard time on the road. She wondered what he and his family would do, once her family left. She barely noticed the thin film of water spreading across the roads of one of the hilliest regions of the city. The struggle of a mother to carry her two children across a submerged road almost escaped her eye because her mind was completely torn about whether she would really, truly leave all these people to suffer.

Guilt, anger, and helplessness hounded her throughout the immigration process and during the wait for the boarding call. She looked around at the airport that had been hastily constructed because the old one was as good as

underwater. She looked at the people, dressed immaculately, acting as though this was normal, as if they were entitled to be able to leave while the poor were wiped out. By nature's wrath.

Time passed in a daze, and soon she was standing in line, and a young man with a sickening smile on his face was holding his hand out for her ticket.

All she had to do was leave. Turn around, and leave. Where she would go, how she would survive—those seemed like trivial things, minor details. All she had to do was leave, and then she'd truly prove that she wasn't okay with this.

"Ma'am, you're holding up the line," the official pointed out. Her gaze travelled from him to her mother's concerned face, and her father's scowl. She could see the faces of her neighbours, classmates, house staff—who were all struggling to survive, and would be doing so for whatever length of time they had left before the rising sea claimed the land. What kind of a monster would just leave?

"Ma'am?"

"Right. Sorry," she said, and held out her ticket before shuffling along behind her parents.

Despite being a hopeless fangirl, Marisha Aziz lives under delusions of awesomeness. Contact her at marisha.aziz@gmail.com to give her another excuse to ignore her teetering pile of life problems.