

Flight Of The Fox

Chapter One: Into the Unknown

~By Jayden Xiao

The A380 engines were on fire and failing—a plume of black smoke streaked behind the plane like an arrow of death. I frantically fumbled for my phone, thinking, "I need to tell my parents, 'Goodbye, I love you.'" No signal

A flight attendant said something over the loudspeaker, but I couldn't hear. Everyone screamed. Some bounced. Some bashed their heads into bulkheads. As the plane took a dive and a turn, it suddenly went as silent as a library on fire. My vision went to black oblivion as I curled into the fetal position, and everything turned black.

The captain's voice was low and dark as he said, "Everyone, brace for impact!!!"

I guess we're landing in the woods—I was surprised my mind created such a dull sentence before death. When I woke up, there was no wing to my left, and the emergency exit was now a giant hole. In slow motion, I regained my other senses. Screaming babies. The earth smells of forest air. The air was humid.

My neck was stiff as a rock. Parts of my body wouldn't move. For a moment, I worried I was paralyzed. When my toes and legs started to move, I unbuckled myself and heard, "Follow the emergency lights to the nearest exit. Evacuate using the slide; don't jump from the plane. Leave your belongings behind." I passed the shattered screens and dangling oxygen masks, slid down the bright yellow, inflatable emergency slide, and waved the smoke from the sparking electrical fire away from my face. Crowds of people huddled together in shock.

I walked away, feeling antisocial and claustrophobic. Standing on the wet forest floor, I saw something strange in the distance. But it was just a fox slinking through the trees. I looked behind me and saw two other kids, both older than me. The kids' faces were bloody and cut. Twitchy and slowly, they approached me.

The taller one looked at me, "Did you see that fox?"

The shorter one said, "Yeah, that was not just a fox; its eyes beamed daggers at me."

The fox stared, then vanished from sight. Something wasn't right, but then again, how could anything be right after a plane crash? The flight attendant did a roll call. As people called "here," the shorter kid said, "My name's Milo, I'm from Chicago. My phone is fried." He held out his phone, cracked as the cockpit windows.

"I'm Ethan," I said.

"And I'm Evelyn," the taller girl said.

"I think the fox wants us to follow it." Milo blurted with his eyes wide.

"You want to follow the mysterious fox? Are you dumb?" Evelyn scoffed.

Milo sighed and scratched his head, "If I see that fox again...I WILL follow it!"

"Did you hit your head? Are you delusional? We are not following a fox into the forest. It isn't speaking to you. You're completely crazy!"

"First," I cut in, trying to distract him from arguing, "Let's get what we can from the plane."

We turned towards the smoking wreckage. Evelyn and I, along with others, volunteered to search the plane. I made my way through the body of the aircraft, snatching water, candy, and a first aid kit.. Nobody was saying it aloud, but everyone wondered...*did anyone die?*

As we moved to the rear, we heard a low growl which froze us. My heart dropped.

"What was that?" I whispered, and Evelyn shushed me with a finger. That sound came again, deeper, closer. Something breathing in the shadows. Then silence.

"Let's get out of here," I whispered.

We climbed out of the aircraft, careful not to make any noise as if there was a predator behind us. Outside, passengers had made shelters out of seat cushions and tarps. Some sat paralyzed, others stood in silence, and others wandered back and forth, trying to get a signal on their phones. We deposited the items to those collecting and organizing them.

The forest was alive with the sound of serpents hissing, birds chirping, and leaves falling. *I must be out of shock now.* And at the same spot as before, the fox was sitting.

Milo said, "Maybe it's not just a fox."

We looked at each other with a knowing glance. The temptation of adventure was too much.

Milo said, "If I die, I'm blaming it on you."

Evelyn looked at me, "This is ridiculous, you two are ignorant sitting ducks."

And just like that, the three of us followed. Little did we know, the plane crash was only the beginning. We walked quickly, avoiding fallen branches and twisted roots. The air was cool under the forest's canopy. The fox kept a steady pace, never too fast nor slow, almost like it wanted us to follow.

After a while, we found a clearing covered in moss and strange symbols cut into the grass. In the center stood a tall, stone arch. The fox turned to us one last time, then disappeared into the arch's darkness.

We stepped forward, and the world trembled. Trees grew up into the sky, skyscraper-high. Then, a deep, bone-rattling roar echoed through the forest. From the shadows, something massive emerged. Almost ten feet tall, wrapped in bark-like armour with glowing green eyes where a face should be. Vines coiled around its body.

Growling, the creature stepped forward and locked eyes on us. The fox appeared, standing between us and the monster, its fur glowing yellow. "Run!" I shouted.

We did. Evelyn, Milo and I were racing out of the glowing forest. But Evelyn tripped and fell.

We turned back. She accidentally touched one of the symbols, and it pulsed beneath her fingers. With a loud boom, a portal appeared.

"Hurry! Let's go through," Milo yelled. I nodded. Evelyn groaned. We picked her up, and together, we stepped through the blue abyss. The air shimmered around us like rippling water, and the ground beneath our feet disappeared.

Somewhere in the distance, the fox howled—not like an animal, but like something calling us home.

