



Reluctant Press presents:

By My Choice



Nick Lorange

AN 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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Thank you.

By My Choice

By Nick Lorance

As I read the diary. I am struck by the fact that almost everything that has happened to me was by my own choice. I watch the sea break against the shore, hear the cry of birds, and my mind goes back...

I was always small. Slim, barely five feet five inches tall, I was the despair of my father. He had wanted someone his size, six feet three, a linebacker in college. Instead he got a boy who read, sang and danced. I had grown my hair long in rebellion against him; it hung to just below my shoulders. It looked fine, swirling with me in dance class as I lifted the girls in ballet.

I graduated high school in the upper fifth of the class and hoped to go to college, but my father disagreed. If I went for a business degree, he would pay

for it. The theatrical degree I wanted would have to be paid for by me.

I considered the options. Business bored me but I would have to work two jobs just to pay for tuition. My mother convinced him to let me see some of the world, so he sprung for a flight to Australia, and a cruise among the Indonesian islands aboard a small liner named the *Jakarta Queen*.

The path of your life can be changed by something small; say a mine laid before you were born...

The explosion lifted the liner, breaking her back in the same moment. The ship slammed back down and began sinking in seconds.

All I remembered was the blast. One moment I was standing at the rail, watching the sun set, then the fore part of the ship lifted even as the stern did. I was scrambling for a handhold as the stern lifted almost vertical.

I let go and fell screaming into the water. Something smacked me in the face and I lost consciousness.

I don't know how long I was in darkness. All I knew was that I was wet, cold, and clinging to something. It was a flat hatch like they use to seal cargo holds. What had caused it? I wondered. There were no wars going on in the area, but historically a lot of ships are still sunk by mines from World War I even after almost a century.

In this region however, it was more likely one from WWII. With great effort, I climbed up on the hatch. As large as it was, I felt I could stand, and I did so carefully. There was nothing in sight as far as the horizon. I was alone with no food or water. A pity I could not turn it over; with the ridged edge up, I would have somewhere to catch water if it rained. I cataloged what

I had for survival gear. My clothes, the pants shredded down the back from sliding down the deck, so torn my ass hung out; a shirt that was a bit ripped but serviceable. My wallet was gone and I wanted to curse between laughing. I'd had about five hundred dollars in it. Enough to replace my wardrobe, for a good meal and a taxi to the embassy.

If there were a store, or a restaurant, or a taxi or an embassy.

I crawled along the edge. There was a rope that went down into the depths and I caught it, pulling it up. The end of the rope had a heavy weight attached to it; the rope was thirty feet long. I stood, paying the rope out as I did. There was five feet more rope than there was from the point it connected in the center of one side, and I considered how to do this. I lifted the end, wrapping around my waist, then leaned back as hard as I could. It lifted, but not enough. Only the luck of having the wind lift it would help. Maybe I could fashion a fishhook to catch something to eat, but fishing with a half-inch manila line is almost ridiculous.

I spied something floating nearby, and grabbed the rope. It looked like one of those aluminum suitcases or a camera case. Whatever was in it might keep me alive a little longer. I cast the rope time and again, trying to get it over the case. Finally I succeeded; the weight on the other end dropped into the depths, the rope showing it closer. Finally I could reach it.

It was a little heavy, but my mind filled it with sports bars and bottled water, sandwiches and bottled tea. I caught the latches and flung it open.

Clothes, a girl's clothes. I pawed through it frantically. Two dresses, a skirt and blouse combination. Lady bras and panties, garter belts, half a dozen pairs

of stockings, a single piece bathing suit and near the bottom, a cache of candy bars and a makeup kit. I didn't know who the woman had been, but I wished her soul well as I stuffed a candy bar in my mouth. I found a passport, and flipped it open.



Lisette DuBois, Dutch national, seventeen years old.

I looked at her for a long time as I chewed that manna from the sea. Why had she been traveling here? I know the Islands had once been Dutch, but that was before WWII. Now they were the sprawling nations of Micronesia and Indonesia.

Well, she was gone, and I was still alive. I took everything out of the case, laying it out neatly. The clothes I had just enumerated, a Qipao, what westerners called a cheongsam, and a summer dress. There were also stockings, underwear, candy, the makeup case and a diary with a pen. I almost threw the last two away, but I could use them. I could record what happened to me; if I did not survive, there would be a record of what remained of my life. Last but not least was some suntan lotion with sunblock and sunglasses.

Day 2

I awoke with a horrible sunburn on my back and ass. The clothes might cover, but not well enough to avoid that. I considered trying to lay on my back if I slept again, but the sheer agony of trying the position made me scream aloud. I considered Lisette's clothes. Except for the ankle-length cheongsam, there was nothing that would cover all of me and even that left my arms exposed. I ripped away the pants, removed the shirt. I hadn't seen how bad the back of it was. It was in worse tatters than the pants. I looked at the cheongsam. It would cover me better than what I had on. With the suntan lotion and sun block, I could cover up enough to avoid more sunburn.

I opened the buttons, and slid it on. It was an odd feeling, satin and silk against my skin, but I was too tired hungry and thirsty to care. I buttoned it back up, feeling it snug against my body. The lotion went on, the cooling balm a bit of relief from the burning sensation.

Still nothing in sight. My lips felt chapped, and I dug in the makeup case. No lip balm, nothing but lipstick and lip gloss. I read the label. Moisturizing lip stick. I considered, then shrugged. It wasn't like there were hordes of people watching. Using the mirror, I carefully applied it. I fashioned a shade from the dress so the sun would not pound so hard on me. My arm was tight around the case as I ate another candy bar and fell asleep.

I awoke, feeling rain falling on me. I rolled over, wincing at the pain, and saw heavy clouds headed for me. I grabbed the case, dumped it out, then flipped it upright as suddenly the shower became a pounding downpour. I used my shirt to sluice it across the hatch, cleaning away the salt, then frantically began to squeeze the precious liquid into my only container. I kept working at it until suddenly the storm was past. I looked at the case and my mind began to calculate. The open part was 20 inches wide, 36 inches long, four inches deep. 2880 cubic inches. Over eleven quarts of water.

As I cupped my hands and drank, I knew my math teacher in high school would have been proud of me. I stopped after a few minutes, waiting for an hour before I drank again. I didn't want to waste any of it by throwing it back up. I drank again, and stopped after about two quarts. Then I closed the case firmly. I didn't want it tainted by salt or evaporating away.

Day 3.

Still nothing to see. I drank and ate another candy bar. I only had one left. The shade and long dress protected my skin, though I had to slather the suntan lotion and sunblock on my exposed arms, legs, and face. This time I used the lip gloss. It had a nice flavor, and I found myself licking the strawberry gloss. I could almost picture what I looked like from a distance. From that range an observer would not see my features, only my outline. A young woman lazily sunning herself on a flat platform, using her suitcase as a pillow, and another dress as an umbrella. I fell asleep as the sun went down.

Day 6.

No food for two days. I felt my stomach grumble. Another rain shower filled my container. Right then I would have traded all of it for a hamburger and fries. I watched the horizon, not wanting to move. There was a bar of darkness there. I lifted my hand, using it as a shade. An island? Maybe a larger storm. The wind was picking up, and I looked around. No, behind me was the storm, and it was huge.

The Island

Time passed as I lay there. I saw a covering of tightly plaited palm leaves above me, a man's face, then nothing. Later I saw a petite woman looking at me, patting my shoulder, saying, "You be good girl."

I remember her four times. Each time I remember something being shoved into my rectum, the feeling of heaviness in my belly, then something plugging me

like a sink. I was rolled onto my back as my stomach was gently rubbed. Then, much later, I heard what might be birdsong as the sun rose. I was walked to a trench, and evacuated my bowels.

When I finally came to, I was on a narrow mattress of cotton stuffed with sweet smelling grass and herbs. I was in a shift of some kind, and the roof was still palm fronds. The man I had seen in my brief times of consciousness came in, setting down a woven bucket. He saw me looking at him and hunkered down. He was a little taller than I was, with a wide flat face, and almond eyes in that dusky countenance.

“Feel better?” He asked. I nodded. He got a clay cup, lifted my body gently, and held the cup to my lips. Refreshing cool water ran down my throat. I drank greedily. It wasn’t lukewarm like the water that had been in the case. He lowered the cup, then lay me back down. “You sleep long time. I get food.”

I lay there, looking through the doorway into the camp beyond. Men in pants and shirts moved about, and women in shifts like what I wore carried wood or beat fruit into paste and grain into meal.

The man returned and held a cup. I didn’t recognize the taste of the juice, but my body arched up. I was mewling with hunger as I drained that cup and two more. Fried and mashed fruit followed by dried fish was pressed between my lips, and I devoured it all. The man gently laid me down, and I looked at the roof above again. A young woman came in, hunkering down beside the bed.

“Where... where am I?” I whispered.

"Island, Mata kail." the man said. "Do not know English." He drew a J shape with a round top. "Shape like this."

I looked at it. Something was causing me to have problems thinking. "A metal piece to catch fish? A fishhook?"

"Yes. Named because island is same shape."

"Natives?" I asked. Even as I did, I could see that wasn't true. Among those outside here were Caucasians, light-skinned Asians, and those as dusky as the two who were with me out there. Only the women were homogeneous, all dusky like the woman by me. I lifted my arm. After my ordeal, my skin was as dark as theirs.

"No. Prison. Special secret prison," the man told me. "So secret we all die before it be revealed." He touched his chest, then pointed at the men. "If this is no secret, we all die."

"The women?" I had noticed that the women had been ignored.

"They from local tribes. Three on islands east, west, and south." He pointed so I knew the directions. "They allowed to trade with this island. We trade them fish fruit and pearls." He motioned toward the silent woman beside him. "They trade women."

"Slave?" I asked.

He grinned, shaking his head. "Some stay for long time, some for short. All can leave. But men stay here or die."

"But I'm not one of their prisoners!" I protested.

"No matter. They know you man, you become prisoner. Good you dress like girl."