



Evangeline, or Theories of Childhood Development

1. *Evangeline*

Bellied down on the bottom bunk, with the door barely ajar, the children are invisible to the three grown-ups in the big room outside. Evangeline is boss of the iPad. Seven years old, she is mostly in charge of *whatever*. But sometimes she lets Winnie who is four, or Oliver who is three, pretend to be the boss. Because it makes them happy. And stops them from screaming so loud that she can't hear what the guys in the iPad are saying.

Saying, and singing. Together, Moana and Evangeline sing the "How Far I'll Go" song, which tells about sailing past the reefs that surround Moana's dying island. Evangeline knows all the words. Winnie, face screwed into a hate curse, headbutts her. Oliver slurps loudly at his juice bottle, showing off. He is only supposed to have one bottle and not until bedtime, but when he whined, Mommy said, "Just this once." Which she says, like, ten times a day.

From the big room, Momalee's voice, sharp and unfamiliar, pierces the Evangeline-and-Moana world.

"Isn't it time to call the kids to the table?"

"They're happy. Leave them," answers Mommy. Evangeline nods fierce agreement.

Momalee, whose real name is Lee, who wants to be called Momalee instead of Grandma like everyone else's grandmother, hardly ever visits them at home in DC. But she has joined in on their vacation in this house Daddy rented in *Puerto Rico*. Puerto Rico has beaches and palm trees and wild chickens, so it is actually like Moana's Polynesian island as Daddy promised, except for being garbage in places, and up to now, not magic.

Momalee says, "I probably shouldn't ask, but did you consider making this a *screen-free* trip?"

"Sure. For about five seconds." Mommy's voice.

"Well?"

Evangeline's insides scrunch together. She clutches the lid of the iPad and cocks her ear toward the big room.

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“Honestly, Lee, do you think we three would be enjoying this peaceful adult moment together if we didn’t let them watch? If *that’s* the vacation you wanted...” Mommy makes an impatient whooshing sound.

Momalee says, “I’m not criticizing your parenting, Annie! But can you dismiss the science? The negative correlation between the amount of time young children spend interacting with *screens*, and their social and intellectual develop—”

There’s the dragon hiss of Daddy opening a beer. “Puleese, Mama! No lectures, okay? Not here. This is *vacation*.”

“Oliver has trouble making eye contact!”

“Maybe with you, Mama.”

“You always say such sweet things.”

“I was kidding! Hey. I’m sorry. Smile?”

Momalee is silent. Evangeline closes the laptop completely.

Daddy says, “So, did I turn out such a basket case? You used to let me and the bros watch TV every single night.”

“For one hour, Hugh. Monitored. After homework and chores.”

Evangeline has no clue what “chores” is.

“Oh, Lee,” sighs Mommy. “These kids—*our* kids?— watch way less than your seven hours a week! No screens allowed on school nights. Strict rule.”

Evangeline rolls her eyes and slaps her hand over her mouth. “*Mommy lied,*” she whispers. Winnie copies the eye roll perfectly.

“You *gu-uys*,” Momalee calls in a chirpy voice. “Want to show me your movie?”

Slow-motion, like a prisoner obeying orders, Evangeline rolls off the bed, balancing the iPad in two hands. Sand from her swim shirt drizzles on the sheets. Oliver howls and throws his bottle full force, hitting Winnie who howls louder and more fearsomely. Evangeline is proud of how fearsome Winnie can be.

This is a real-life test. Momalee has powers. She has already rocked the normal ways of their family: what they can eat and when. Whose lap who gets to sit on in the rented Jeep.

Evangeline has to prove the iPad is a *good thing*. She sets it on the dining table where everyone can watch. Moana and her pig set sail against all the rules to cross the barrier reef. The waves are like black and *miles* high. Smiling, Evangeline sways back and forth like the sea fans do.

“This one could be a dancer,” says Momalee. “So tall and graceful.” Evangeline stops moving. It’s true I look like Moana, she thinks. Except that my skin stays white from too much sunscreen.

“Watch!” Evangeline knows what is about to happen, but still she jumps when Moana and the pig are pushed off the catamaran by the

whacking boom. The catamaran breaks into pieces. Moana is trapped miles under water with her foot stuck in spiny coral.

“This is *terrifying*,” shouts Momalee over the cries of Oliver and Winnie. “Typical Disney crap! Do you have scary nightmares, Evvie?”

Evangeline shakes her head. “Wait for the next part, guys. Will everyone be *quiet*, please?” Her sister and brother pipe down.

Moana smashes the coral with a rock. The *waves* gather, they love her, they lift her and save her...

“Annie, how often have they watched this movie?”

“Tonight is only the second time,” says Mommy.

Winnie throws up, just a gob, from excitement. Daddy swipes her chin with a kitchen towel.

“*Four times.*” Evangeline holds up her fingers proudly, knowing it’s dangerous. But four is the truth.

Momalee shakes her head. “Let’s close the machine now, sweeties, okay? I’ll read you a story instead, a brand new one—” She reaches a shaky hand toward the iPad. *To shut it.*

But Evangeline is quicker, darting between the grown-up bodies to snatch up the iPad and protect it behind crossed arms. She walks backward firmly on her heels toward the bunk room. Her smile keeps slipping off her face. Inside the iPad, Moana is waiting. Evangeline’s other sister. No—Evangeline is Moana, really. If they decide to take away Moana, Evangeline will just die. Already she can hardly suck in a breath. Oliver and Winnie walk backward on each side of her, like guards.

They are all in the bunk room now. Outside the windows the sky is totally black, not soapsuds gray like at home. She mouths to Winnie: *Shut the door.*

Through the closed door, she can still hear Their voices. “You let her behave like that? You let *them* get away with... never mind. Sorry. *You’re* the parents. I’ll stop. Not another word out of me. Ever.”

“Jeez, Mama! We all *love* you. Don’t pull the martyr thing!”

Evangeline slowly lifts the iPad’s silver lid, like Aladdin opening the treasure chest. The screen blooms blue and orange. She flops on the bed with Winnie and Oliver. They watch, breathing hard, head to head.

2. *Hugh*

The trip was Hugh’s brainstorm. Two working parents, three winter-stressed kids, all in need of air and sun and a break from Washington’s post-election mourning. He booked the cottage for five days, saving the final night for an “ecolodge” in the National Rainforest. He would happily drive his kids up a hundred switchbacks to the top of El Yunque

for them to experience the riches of this stupendous sanctuary. What could go wrong?

Doubt kicks in at six a.m., as they bag up wet swimsuits while the kids murmur wistfully, philosophically, about *how sad* to leave the cottage, the iguana at the bottom of the garden, the tame thrush in the lime tree, the sea turtles and jacks and parrotfish (in five days, Evangeline has become an intrepid snorkeler), Rocco's Tacoria, and can they *at least* keep the hermit crabs?

Oliver squats in a corner, scratching a bloody bug bite. When his grandmother approaches with Benadryl, he shrieks in terror. They spray the kids 24/7, but arthropods find chinks. The word *Zika* is taboo. How bad are the mosquitoes in the rainforest?

One selfish Daddy. Obsessed with wanting to show them the pulsing, steaming world of El Yunque that he discovered at age seven, on an impromptu escape with Lee. Small boy, single mother, both awe-struck at seeing plants known only as tame window decorations in the States—ferns, poinsettias, orchids—exploding up to the clouds like Jack's beanstalk. Citric green, red, yellow, oozing purple . . .

This won't be the first time he has pushed the envelope to turn a vision into reality. "But hey, Jerkface," he reminds himself, heaving pink plastic suitcases into the back of the Jeep, "there's times you nailed it."

Casa Galena, nestled into the verdant flank of El Yunque, could be the set for *A Hundred Years of Solitude*. A ramshackle warren of outdoor corridors and low-railed terraces that a boisterous child could easily tumble over. Treetops two hundred feet below. Somewhere close by, a cataract roars nonstop, only its high-spiraling spume visible.

Are they the only guests? The grim proprietress, somewhere between eighty and infinity, shakes like a spider thread in a breeze. Her hefty son, on his knees, fiddles with a balky modem. "No internet, so no phone. Sorry, folks."

"Oh, no problem!" Hugh assures. But no restaurant either?

Winnie whispers, "Daddy, I'm *starving*."

Hugh lifts her up, a slimy bundle of car sweat. Jealous Oliver tackles his leg. "Easy, soldier, I've told you, don't pull Daddy's shorts down." Annie haggles with their hosts for food. Who cares if the innkeepers label them irresponsible, improvident parents?

Evangeline moans, eyes rolled up white, clutching her little stomach. She is ninety-fifth percentile in height and perilously beautiful. A Botticelli maiden, one friend said. Hugh suffers nightmare flash-forwards of his daughter at fifteen being abducted by aliens to a *Paris Vogue* photo shoot.

His mother, her expression unusually content and concentrated, is spooning the last cup of yogurt into three kids' eager bird beaks. Now they will let her come near them!

Something velvety caresses his leg. Startled, he looks down at shimmering copper feathers. Puerto Rico must have more chickens than humans. They are everywhere, pecking, flying, perched in trees to scold the mangy cats below.

An hour later, the proprietress's homemade chicken sandwiches taste delicious.

Evangeline leads the way down toward the first rock pool, her sequined sneakers sparkling on the sun-dappled path, Winnie at her heels. Next go Lee and Annie with backpacks. Hugh covers the rear, wearing a massive pack from his service days stenciled "Sea-Raiders." Oliver straddling his shoulders.

"An easy hike to the first rock-pool," the proprietress assured them. But under the tree canopy the path quickly narrows, steepens. Pea-shot pebbles alternate with patches of wet leaves big as plates. The children are laughing, slipping, accelerating. Lee says, "Watch your feets, you guys! Don't go head over teacup out here. We don't want any sprained ankles."

"Listen to Momalee. She's giving you some good advice." Hugh smiles at his mother's back. She is a trooper, patting the rock face for hand-holds, bracing herself, determined, for a leap from root to root. She's thinner than Evangeline. And not as strong. Maybe it's her he should worry about out here on the climb, not the kids. He tends to forget her age—

Well, just as she does.

Suddenly the waterfall surrounds them. Above, ahead, and rushing down mountain to the distant sea. A perpendicular whitewater torrent, sluicing over boulders big as elephant rumps. Hugh, peering up mountain into the sun's glare for the indiscernible origin, is unbalanced by the clamor, the brightness, the height. The relentless *power* of the churning water. He crouches, to set his son down on solid ground.

Although the rock pool here looks calm and inviting, it unnerves Hugh and Annie. On the north edge, a wide lip pours like a tipped cauldron over boulders and razor-edge crags down to where the next pool waits, invisible, maybe a quarter mile below. He and Annie wade in, struggling and slipping, to cordon off the lip. Teamwork. The kids have put each other's water wings on and are already splashing into the shallow side. Their grandmother—testing her footing and the current, and preoccupied, as often, with her own situation—pays them no mind.

She even throws Hugh a look he reads as scoffing, as in, *Aren't you two being somewhat over-protective?* She's thrown that look before.

Evangeline dog-paddles upstream against the current to Daddy's outstretched hands, piping with pride like the lime-tree thrush. Winnie's silhouette darts above him along a boulder, a baby goat scrambling over the rocks, herded by her biped mother. Momalee holds naked Oliver up to examine a purple orchid that hangs from a crevice like a bellpull.

This is the other Hugh, the one constantly tracking and checking those he's responsible for, those he loves, vigilance swiveling 360. The Hugh who trained as a Marine Sea Raider and served in a jungle that was Hell's double-down to this rain garden's Eden, where no one knew or would ever admit U.S. operatives were present. The Hugh who was lucky not to have come home with debilitating paranoia like too many of the guys.

With the Raider appeased, the Vision Maker returns. My God, look at these kids! They're in heaven. A day of shared discoveries, memories... is what makes a *family*.

He lifts Evangeline high out of the water and calls, "Hey, everybody! Who's feeling the burn? Who wants to push on to the *next* pool?"

To pick up the trail again they still must traverse two thirds of the waterfall, scaling slippery boulders. Hugh shoulders first his pack, towels dangling from its davits, then his son. The girls are nimble as geckos, but Lee, chary of heights, struggles and falls behind. Dropping to all fours she eventually progresses, spider-like. Hugh watches with pained tenderness. Lee won't give up her ratty bikini, while Annie, lovely and rounded after three pregnancies, wears a modest one-piece.

It's Annie who leads inland now, holding Winnie's hand. Here, lower in the canopy, only isolated shafts of sunlight strike through the giant bamboo and ferns. Rope-thick vines loop downward from roots anchored high overhead. The ground is puddle pocked, littered with enormous palm fronds, five or six feet long, clubbed at one end. Winnie and Evangeline try to lift one. Too heavy. A mudhole sucks off Evangeline's sneaker. Her complaints are ignored. "There's no turning back now, guys!" *Why not, Daddy?* he asks himself. Because...giving up is not part of the experience he planned for them.

"There! I see it! The next pool!" Evangeline jabs her index finger down through the green toward a silvery glow.

"Good job," praises Annie. Winnie prances. But Hugh's mother stops short. She looks back, upward at her son. Is this too much, has her stamina suddenly run out? The narrow stretch of trail ahead is nearly thirty-five degrees steep, paved with rotting mango leaves.

Evangeline begins a controlled sideways slide down the chute.

“Do like me, guys...Momalee, don’t be nervous, I’m showing you how!”

Yes. They are beginning to include Momalee. Let her call herself any goofy name she wants. He sets Oliver down in order to reach for his iPhone. We will frame this picture...

“Lee, *don’t do that!*” Annie’s cry of warning. “Those vines won’t hold your—”

Hugh glances up from the iPhone. His teetering mother has grabbed a handful of vines to steady herself. As the improvised rope shreds, she slides down the chute, grasping in panic for another vine-braid. This one, for the moment, bears her weight. She swings back and forth on it, a skinny white bell clapper.

And then comes an infernal clattering racket, like a downed helicopter crashing through trees. A projectile six feet long, clubbed at one end, fans his face, barely misses Oliver and his mother.

The scream comes from Evangeline.

She lies sprawled, head downhill in the mud, the palm frond across her back. She is howling, panicked high-pitched cries. His mind flashes on the caged macaws at Rocco’s, the green and red screamers. His daughter in her red bathing suit under a green frond. In his mind, he sees a jungle insurgent: green cammies, bright slashes of blood. Slight as a schoolboy. Hugh’s textbook kill.

This in less than the seconds it takes to reach his daughter, yank away the dead weight of the palm frond. Later he will wonder at how the mind roams, infinitely quick in time and space.

“Daddy. *Help me.*”

Evangeline only senses him near. She stares straight ahead into the forest, wide-eyed. Seeing what or whom? Blood trickling through her light brown hair. Bold red stripes down her cheek. The blue eyes spared, thank God. Shoulder lacerated. Darker, venous blood welling on her thigh.

Annie kneels in the mud beside him. “Hugh, my God, her *leg.*”

Evangeline whimpers. “I’m scared.”

“Hush baby, it’s all right, you’re going to be fine, it’s over, you’re *safe.* Mommy’s right here, Daddy’s here, we’re all together—”

Try to gauge the extent of injury. And comfort his terrified firstborn, as he was able in her first hours, discovering the healing power of his low, slow voice.

Deep gash. Scars. No future model this one. How the mind roams.

“Evvie, hey, can you move your arms for me? Hey, that’s excellent! And your legs, just a little? *Fantastic.*” Wrap the leg tight in a twisted

towel. Pressure bandage. He decides it is reasonable to lift her in his arms. Careful with the bloodied leg. Evangeline sobs into him, into herself, shaking.

He turns to his mother. Whatever she sees in his face makes her hold up her wobbly splayed hand like a screen.

“It wasn’t me, Hugh! Not my fault! I didn’t make that thing, whatever it was, come down. And I wasn’t anywhere *near* her—” Defensive. Self-obsessed. Not a thought for the child. She, Hugh’s mother, doesn’t give a shit about them. All that matters is her fucking self-image.

“*You could have killed my daughter.*”

Annie’s cool palm on his hot back. “Sweetie. Deep breath, okay? Let’s just—not blame. It wasn’t your mother’s fault. I saw it happen. These palm fronds fall all the time. Lee...her pulling on the vines was...a coincidence.”

Hugh looks around. The littler ones stare back, somber. He starts back up the trail with Evangeline in his arms, her keening in rhythm with his steps. His mind flashes on an illustration of Abraham and Isaac. At the first pool he will wash as much of the mud and debris from her wounds as possible. Christ knows what kind of bacteria breed in this mud. Or should he not touch the leg? Decide, damn it! The innkeeper had boasted about the purity of the El Yunque Falls water. Drinkable, in fact. The peasants trek all the way up here with canisters, for this water. Believe her? *Decide.*

3. Lee

“I notice you are shaking, Señora. Everything copacetic?” The driver has been watching Lee’s attempts to regulate the air-conditioning vents.

“More or less, Maximo. Been a long day. Well, you should know! I’m fine. No worries.” She folds her arms to immobilize them, resigned to the freezing AC blast. Embarrassed by the echo of her voice. When had it become so shrill? And why not tell him the truth? *I have the shakes. The neuro says there’s no cure.*

The truth wants out. “It’s *age*, that’s all. I’m *old*.”

Maximo, swooshing the van in and out of the left lane to pass a jerry-built truck full of mud-caked cows destined for the slaughterhouse, pays no mind. He is reassuringly burly, fifty-something with gelled hair, knobby features, a creased neck and, under his pale-blue striped polo shirt, a drum-taut beer belly. His cell phone rings for the umpteenth time. He answers in Spanish.

They’ve been together since seven in the morning. They’ve used up weather and food, and bonded surprisingly over politics—apparently Trump is manipulating the Puerto Ricans so they’ll vote against state-

hood. Now the sun is setting over the vanishing point of the highway, throwing a burnt-orange wash over the strip malls, chicken joints, weed lots, frail houses, and occasional shiny beige windowless U.S. mega-stores (CVS, TJ Maxx) that line the approach to San Juan. Since they left Lee's family at the hospital close to El Yunque, the van feels haunted in its hollowness.

The evening before, after the accident and their exhausting trek with everyone in shock back up mountain to the inn, Hugh drove Evangeline in the Jeep to the nearest hospital, in Caguas. Annie and Lee stayed the night at Casa Galena with the small ones, battling squalls of mosquitoes and watching anything Winnie wished for on the iPad. In the morning, Maximo's van, sent by Hugh, was waiting to fetch them.

On the drive down, Winnie and Oliver, each clenching a bottle by the nipple between their teeth, clung to their mother, crying in turns. Annie kept trying with no luck to reach Hugh on her cell. Only Maximo addressed a word to Lee, the pariah. She tried to chat, her stomach awash with apprehension.

When they finally entered the hospital lobby, Lee saw only Evangeline. Wearing double johnnies, her thigh swathed in a plasticky bandage; the girl was practicing hopping on a single crutch. The leg wasn't broken, then! Lee's left hand started flapping more wildly than usual—emotion made the tremor worse. She swiped away unwanted tears. Evangeline's pure, pale face, now cleaned up, was scraped along the forehead, but no stitches. So, no scars. Or maybe there'd be a slight one, more like a beauty mark...

"Sweetie, come here, let Momalee *see* you!" Lee dropped into a catcher's crouch, arms spread wide.

Evangeline turned away. Annie and the children flew to Hugh. Hoisting up Oliver, he turned to Maximo. "Man, we've already missed our flight. But my mother's plane, back to Providence? Doesn't leave until seven tonight. How much more to drive her now to the airport in San Juan?" His lowest, gravest voice.

Lee straightened, useless arms dangling. Hugh passed Maximo a folded hundred-dollar bill. Annie said, "Safe landings, Lee. Be sure to call." Hugh touched Lee's shoulder. She had no idea what he wanted to convey. Did *he* know? Evangeline hopped diligently back and forth, long auburn hair swinging to hide her face. Two of the people Lee loves most—the only ones left whom she *can* love—shut her out.

"That was my son calling." Maximo slides his cell back into its car-holster. "I have two girls and a boy. Like you. But all three grown up now."

“Those aren’t mine, you know that, I’m only the grandmother. Maximo, I apologize for all the crying on the drive this morning. It’s not the way I raised *my* children—”

“Oh, tell me about it! But you can’t say zip, right? Just makes for bad feelings all around.”

And so, *they are off to the races*, as Lee’s own mother would have said. Lee about the iPads and teeth-rotting bottles and lack of *responsiveness*, Maximo about talking back and shoplifting and dope and hanging with the wrong gang. “And now, will you believe it, here in PR they passed a law you can’t physically discipline on your own child.”

Lee says, “Well...I don’t think spanking accomplishes much. My kids were sent to their rooms. Or—sometimes a look was enough.” She is proud of that, still.

“When nothing else works? My boy who I just talked to. Diego. Today he has a good job and a family, but a couple years ago he was on the wrong track, smoking weed, cutting school. He said, ‘You can’t stop me!’ My wife said, ‘You going to let him do that, talk to you like that?’ I waited. One day he came in stinking drunk. I hit him across the face. A few times. He said, ‘You can’t do that! I’ll call the cops, they’ll put you jail!’ I said, ‘No problem, you go ahead and call them. While we are waiting for them to arrive, I’ll give you a beating like you never had. *Then* they can put me in jail. And when I get out, I’ll come beat you all over again and maybe worse for your disrespect!’ And I laid into him at that point. I let him have everything I’d saved up. My hands hurt for a week after. He was hurt very bad, bleeding on the floor. ‘*Now* call the police!’ I said. He just lay there crying. For days he didn’t talk to me. He lost a couple teeth, couldn’t hear too well for a while. And you know what?”

The last thing she wants is to know more.

“One day he comes to me and says, ‘Dad, I am sorry. I was wrong. I want your pardon.’ *He thanked me*. He saw he needed the discipline. After that, he never smoked or got into any kind of trouble. My boy Diego. See what I’m saying, about raising kids? Give up the authority, you have failed the job. You and me, Señora, *we* know.”

Lee stares straight ahead at the red ball of sun suspended between the sturdy high-rises of San Juan. Seeing the man beside her in a cold, animal rage, smashing the face of his son who is down pleading on the floor. A shiver grips her from head to foot. Incomprehension. Revulsion. Let him think it’s the blast of the van’s AC.

She pictures her three rooms in Providence. The windowsill plants dried out in her absence, maybe past reviving. And then she realizes what the driver’s just told her: that in families, terrible, terrible things are forgiven every day.

What she did wasn't terrible! Stupid, maybe, and clumsy for sure, and thoughtless—if she *did* anything at all. What do you bet that when she walks into her apartment, the phone will be ringing like crazy? Her son Hugh calling, eager to hear that she's home safe.

4. *Evangeline*

The iPad only has “16%” left. That is *life-threatening*. “Life-threatening” is one of the new doctor words Evangeline has learned in the past week in Alexandria Hospital, which is a gazillion times bigger than the one in Puerto Rico. Also “IV drip” (the yellow tube taped into her arm) and “vancomycin” and “rehabilitation” and “staph infection” and “prosthesis.” Except she doesn't yet exactly know what prosthesis means. But she will figure it out, she always does. When they talk to each other, do they think that just because she's watching the Moana movie, she's *deaf*?

Before the accident, she was such a baby, thinking they couldn't hear her and Moana singing together. She's smarter now, growing up fast like Moana does: first a baby saving baby turtles, then the Chief's daughter in the councils (Evangeline is *so* the Chief's daughter!), and soon the courageous one who, against the Chief's rules, will keep on trying to sail beyond the barrier reef until she makes it—

Evangeline slams her fist on the button next to her bed. Finally a nurse comes. *What now, girl?* Evangeline holds up the iPad. The nurse shrugs and plugs it into the wall for her. Evangeline can command these nurses without *any* words.

The grownups here don't like her. She won't let them! The nurse people change all the time. The doctor calls her “we” and “us.” “We have to be brave,” he says. We? He is a *craazy* dude. Here, they won't let her get down from this cage-bed, let alone practice going fast on crutches. She's not sick! Just that her hurt leg has a drumming inside it, like drums on Moana's island. Just that she is a lot tired. Who wouldn't be? They make her stay in bed all day!

Evangeline misses Winnie and Oliver. A lot. She cry-sings their names when she is alone. When they are allowed in to visit, they reach hands up trying to hug her, but the IV and bandages are in the way. The nurse pulls them back. The ceiling light is achingly bright and the grownups on guard. So the three of them can't get back into the iPad's world together. But they huddle close, and stroke it like a pet.

She begs Mommy and Daddy: “Let's go back to Puerto Rico. I don't care if it's garbagey. This room smells awfuller.”

They say, “Absolutely we’ll go back. Hey, it’s not like Puerto Rico is about to disappear!”

“Only, Moana’s island disappeared.”

“That was only a *movie*, Evangeline. Hey, want to see our photos again?”

“Promise me, Daddy.”

“We’ll go back soon as you...can get on a plane.”

Evangeline hums, “How far I’ll go.” One thing she learned from Moana is, if you want something hard enough, you can make it happen.

Prosthesis. That’s the magic word. To open the swinging doors, to let her out of this bed, out of this hospital. *Prosthesis.*

Moana was trapped under water by the coral. She got out easy; she smashed it with a rock to make it let go of her foot. *But what if the coral was stronger, and the only way for Moana to escape drowning would have been to smash off her own leg?*

The warm iPad humming against her cheek makes her teeth buzz and tickle. She laughs quietly. She’s completely ready for the *life-threatening* adventure ahead. It’s the one way out from here, the only way Evangeline and Moana can push past the reefs into freedom. Into the fierce and beautiful open sea.