

The Island

Angie Brijpaul

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“The rain crashed against the deck’s wooden planks with fury, and the wind howled with no remorse,” Angie Brijpaul writes. The scuba boat suddenly lurches, the captain’s limp body lies across the steering wheel, and the boat sinks. This isn’t the lovely Philippines vacation that ten teens and two sets of parents expected.

The vacationers wake up with no idea how they got from the sunken boat to the spine-chilling, deserted island that doesn’t even contain any animals, birds, or bugs. Although it seems like they are alone on the island, an unknown entity is attacking the vacationers. When Jason encounters Mark in a cave, he sees that “scarlet scratches littered his face and hands, curling around his skin as though he had been grabbed by thorns.” Later, three teens go into the forest to gather fruit and soon discover that one of their party is missing. When the girls check the ground, they discover drag marks and drops of blood. Marie reports that something grabbed her ankle in the dark and pulled.

Mysterious injuries and deaths continue to occur. Sometimes the corpses disappear a few minutes after they die. The strain causes tempers to flare, as between Mr. and Mrs. Razat. After a disagreement with her husband, Mrs. Razat runs into the forest. Nobody sees her again.

Despite this horrendous situation, love affairs develop. Marie’s attraction to Julian began when they first encountered each other on the airplane. When she complains later that Julian loves another girl, Jason insists that it is Marie he loves.

In the novel’s early chapters, the characters’ personalities and individual qualities emerge, such as Diego’s propensity toward clowning and one teen’s traumatic family background. The story focuses equally on each of the teens, rather than on a central character. A conflict in the early part of the book would have better stimulated readers’ interest as they await the later sections’ major catastrophes and faster pace.

Seventeen-year-old author Angie Brijpaul plans to attend university and hopes to become a writer. She has made a good start with *The Island*. Minor incidents in the beginning foreshadow major events that come later, and Brijpaul uses vivid descriptions, which she skillfully works into the action. She describes the guide who takes the group to their hotel as having “a cheery, fake smile glued to his face.” Liberal use of dialogue makes the characters more realistic. Unfortunately, the book does contain a few grammatical, punctuation, and typographical mistakes.

Mrs. Razat speaks a couple of phrases in Spanish, thus providing an ethnic flavor. This novel is appropriate for older teens who are mature enough to handle scenes of violence, blood, and death.

A sunken boat and an island of tragedies are terrible for the novel’s characters, but great for readers. Conflict and misfortune provide fuel to propel readers through the novel.

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