

PROMPT #3: Your main character has been stranded on a desert island for months. Alone... or so they thought. One morning, they wake up to a message written in the sand.

The Glass Horizon

by **Henry Humble**

It was here on the thin speck of white-black against the tapestry of flowing blue that I exist alone. The island is small and sparse but too small to be able to watch all the island at once and so instead I am left with the lingering feeling that I am not doing the watching here on this island all by myself. There is food and water on this island, though I do not know how or why only that I turn past a tree or slip around to the other side of the island when I grow as desperate as to mimic eating with grains of sand and salt and there, I find something, anything to sustain my body for another lumbering day. It is silent here in the deserted landscape. The wind has not blown since the first day a month or less or more ago. It is the lap of the waves gently nursing and retching the island apart at the rate of which only mountains and gods can witness that permeates my prison. Slow, has this sound overtaken my breathing and even now my heart is begging to match the ocean's pace. The water is turquoise, a clear blue-green slowly fading from the clearest azure to the pitchest cobalt deep as the night sky or what I remember of it. There are never any stars in the inky abyss that stretches past my comforting boundaries but at times I think and wish to see movement out there other than the lull of forgone waves. I am not sure why I have yet to end this liminal existence but here I do remain not yet full of sand and salt. I fear to swim not for the chance of drowning or being pulled down under that I would relish you see but I fear I would swim so far only to be pulled back by an invisible chain straight to this island alone and remaining thusly set. I fear I would swim so far that I would hit an endless wall of glass or sky itself that I could touch and taste but not feel or see. But I do not mind. I tell myself on this island of idyllic calm. There are no storms, no wildfires, no sounds except the ebb and chime of waves against the land. I long for the crackle of flame or the cold dampness that bites through your bone and skinned flesh. I do not touch the sea for the salt is

purely made of my unease. There is no change, just the unending gaze of the open sky reflected in the glassy waters. Until my path weaves through the scraggly underbrush and back to the beach where I see it. Change, deep rivulets gouged too deep to be the foreign wind and too purposeful to be an offset wave. No this bears no residue of salt or brine; the sea has not been to this part of the island and yet here does it stand undeniably yet undeciphered a message. I am too rational to read into the scrapings of the natural world. Still, this is unmistakable. Placed here as guidance, a warning even, does a visitor scavenge in the scraggly bush and low-rising dunes of this island I have not truly grown to know? I pace. For this is a message I know. Circling around the island, walking up and down the slender hills, pushing past the dried death of tree and brush, my feet leaving trailing softening footsteps in the sand, intermittently do I look, hesitant to blink for fear it disappears, at the message there unbroken free of glass or glaze. Still, does nothing change. It exists and it exists stalwart even though I pace and hide and peek and stare for hours even days or months or maybe minutes. But it is irrevocable, this sign. Who scraped apart the sand and dune, who bore the weight of acrid salt in their cuts as they dug and cut deep into the ground of this lonely island? I turn to the shore my eyes winding slowly from my feet following up the sand towards the beach each granule speaking to me a thousand words and communicating the depth of worlds inside their small body and then the water comes shrill and clear it tastes the sand savoring the deep grainy swallow and swishing the sand across its shallow tongue and I know all it tastes is the flowery tang of shame. And does it suffer? I peer over the cursory edge, seeing my eyes in the deep reflection of the ocean. I see them spiraling into impossible shapes, the pupil coalescing and overcoming my pale iris just as it chases after the white of the eye collapsing like a convergent star, the reflecting salt pulls together and heaves purging of the unclean depth ridden inside. I collapse to my knees and see it in the water, the message which I ascribed in the sand. I see it in the sky, its pale blue quickly fading into the invisible white of my own mind. Written in the sand, with no wind to blow overheard as I crawl prostrate under the blaze of false sun did, I write and do I write. Lament only self-referentially, for here I am on the island of my own creation and not my design. There is no message here on this speck of brackish white against the great blue, the great eye of the sea and sky ever watchful. Am I here watched by something above far beyond as it blinks, and I cease to exist wrought by the passing specter of time? Am I in a room clad in white and listless staring at the wall chained by inaction? Am I here on the island of my mind? It is unknowable and inconsequential. The message etched in sand is simply absurd and nothing but my own.