



BANISHED TO THIS PLACE **A CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT**

by Lewis Schofield (2007)

Whenever a teacher assigns a typical writing exercise such as “What I Did On My Summer Vacation” or “My Hero” I roll my eyes just like the other kids do. It’s time for teachers to assign something different and exciting, like “Canines: Are They Doggedly Determined To Eat Your Homework?” or “The Fine Art of Discretion: How To Answer A Woman’s Questions Truthfully Without Incurring Her Wrath.”

Now those would be totally awesome writing exercises for kids in Grade 7 as far as I’m concerned. Unfortunately, teachers rarely agree with their students on this point.

In September, my teacher gave us a much more traditional writing exercise. We were to imagine that we were on a deserted island for a year. We were supposedly on this deserted island with five tools of our choosing. I thought for a moment. Five tools. Who would they be?

My mind was jolted back to reality as I realized the teacher meant inanimate objects...so I rejigged my thinking to accommodate the new information.

I began to think about this, and the more I thought about it the more I liked it. Alone on a deserted island with only my imagination to crowd me. This was good. In fact, this was very good. It sounded like an ideal place for a kid like me with Asperger Syndrome. Alas, my hopes were short-lived.

According to my teacher, we were to have one other person on the island with us. Excuse me? One MORE person on this deserted island? ONE? What fun was that going to be?

And besides, if the island was deserted there wouldn’t be anyone else on the island. And if there was someone else on that island, you couldn’t claim it was deserted now, could you?

I had already decided before she announced this latest bit that it would do me a world of good to spend some time alone, away from the rest of the busy universe. As luck would have it, my teacher just had to stick another person in my writing assignment world and interrupt what had been, up to that point, the beginnings of a totally impressive daydream.

At home, I paced the floors furiously as I tried to think of a different angle and a unique perspective. Front room, kitchen, foyer, front room, kitchen, foyer, front room, kitchen, foyer. The floor tiles began to wear into a barely perceptible, but very real, rut.

I wanted to find an approach to the assignment that the other students wouldn't think of writing. Suddenly it came to me, and I started to write.

This is what I wrote.

I have found myself on a deserted island. I know it's deserted because there are no other people anywhere on this island. I know this because there are no signs of civilization. There aren't even any signs of primitive life beyond the animals in the jungle on this island.

I look out on to the beach and I see my speed boat. I left it here the last time I spent a year on this deserted island. Thank goodness I had the sense to leave a gas tank full of gas behind as well.

The island has berries and grapes and bananas and coconuts and plants. This is good because I do not want to kill any of the animals. I don't need a gun for protection or to hunt. Plants do not attack. I do have red flares in case I need to get a passing ship's attention.

I do not have any communications devices. If I am bitten by a poisonous snake, it is the way that God wanted me to go. I am fine with that. My mom is not ok with this radio silence but if she wants to see me, she knows where to find me. I'm on this deserted island.

I have Lola the Cat with me. She is my companion.

Looking down beside me, I have a tool box with five tools. I will be making a hammock to sleep in from materials on the island and building a better shelter to protect me against the elements should I need another house.

I have a number of items already made from the last time I was on the island hidden away in a cave not far from here. And, of course, there's the sturdy but small shelter I built last year.

Everything I need is on the island with me and what isn't already made, I can make myself.

After a while, I think if I could bring one other person to this island with me it would be the Doctor from Doctor Who. He could accelerate the year if the year dragged on and I could wake up the next morning at the end of the year. This way I wouldn't be gone for so long even though it would still be a year for everyone else. Then I wouldn't have to worry about feeling so lonely.

© Lewis Schofield 2007
All Rights Reserved.

