

Loslie's Challenge

Loslie - the ancient water god that our people have worshipped for hundreds of years on the isolated island of our tribespeople. Our island has golden sand on the beach and a dark, cold, murky, saltwater lake: Loslie's Lake.

Loslie's Challenge is held every year in the lake, always the same challenge, always the same rules. The challenge: five people of any age are forced to start on different sides of the bank, facing the lake. Then they have to go into the depths of the lake where a maze awaits. The maze is always changing as it is made out of kelp and several other, twisting, fast growing plants. But it is always a maze.

The people entering have been trained in water breathing, the strength and power to hold our breath for up to 10 minutes.

The rules are: every contestant must enter at the same time. They swim into the water and to the entrance of the maze. In the maze there are pockets of air and light placed randomly. You can't swim up because of the twisted seaweed covering the roof.

Somewhere, in the middle of the maze is the prize: food, water, air and a hole in the roof to escape. First person to emerge at the top wins, sometimes there are no winners. If there is a winner the tribespeople still in the maze are sucked into the abyss, no one knows by what, but they are pulled into the mud. Never to be seen again.

Some people drown within the first thirty minutes; others can't handle the pressure of the dark, gloomy, murky maze and call to the gods, asking them to suck them down into the abyss below.

The competition never lasts long because there is no food. Our tribe has learned to drink sea water; our stomachs over the years have evolved to be able to convert salt water into fresh water.

Monsters await, fish swim by... some deadly. Octopuses- small, poisonous and impossible to see. Eels zapping you, then the paralysing pain seeps through your body and into your veins.

My name is Calco; I have been chosen at random to enter the games with other unlucky tribespeople that have been picked. I'm on the bank now, waiting for the signal of the elders that tells us to go.

The elders wave pine leaves towards us and all the chosen people rush into the water, some diving, and some swimming. I wade in until the water is up to my armpits; I then take a deep breath and dive into the murky depths below.

Light slowly fades away from me as I swim further into the maze, the tunnel entrance covering up with plants behind me. I swim further ahead, I can barely see and the salt water is slowly stinging my eyes. I am a fast swimmer, I played with my friends in the water by the beach when I was little, before I knew about this one in five chance of death that would come when I was older.

I swim further, closing my eyes so as not to burn them. I feel around a corner, no idea if I'm going the right way.

Everything is eerie, I can hear no sound. I feel nothing... my skin is water resistant after all these years of swimming. I open my eyes and for a moment don't know what I see. I get a glimpse of light streaming out ahead.

I swim full pelt towards the light. When I reach it I stick my head in the pocket and my lungs are refreshed with oxygen.

I look behind me now that I've got a better view in the pocket. I see an eel moving towards me, its poison ready to inject, only three metres away.

I pull my head out of the pocket, quickly taking one big breath and swim through the water, adrenaline pulsing through me. I don't know how many contestants are left... maybe I'm the last one... I have no idea.

I swerve around another corner and see another light. I need to **keep** moving. I head towards it, but it's not an air pocket. I have reached the end. I swim up through the hole in the ceiling, my lungs dying for air. I get to the top and stick my head out of the water, inhaling sweet air.

I've won.