

Illa and the Stream

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Illa bounded through the woods, full of pure joy. She paused next to a moss covered log until her mother caught up. Illa was the fastest deer in the forest, though she had not gotten her white tail yet. Her mother sighed.

"If you run any faster, you'll run all your fur off." Illa grinned and nuzzled her mother on the neck. Then she leapt over a large rock and disappeared. Her mother shook her head as they reached the stream. The stream was a thin, rocky river that gurgled and bounced like a newborn baby. Illa loved the stream. She would jump in and tiny glistening droplets would flash like diamonds as they flew up around her. She went to her favorite spot, a little pool of water that was always cool even on the hottest days. She rolled in the water and then walked up to where her mother was drinking. She dunked her head into the clear water and drank it down, savoring every drop of the refreshing liquid. She rubbed her head against her mother's torso and slipped back through the dense pine trees until she found a suitable place to sleep. When she woke up, it had started to rain.

"I hate the rain," Illa moaned.

Her mother sighed "Without the rain all the plants would die and we would have nothing to eat."

"That doesn't mean I have to like it," Illa said gloomily. "It makes everything gray and damp." Illa wandered throughout the meadow, speaking through large bites of grass.

"Can we go to the lick today?" Illa's mother had shown her an old salt lick at the edge of the forest. It was far away but it tasted so good that she wanted to go every day.

"No, Illa" said her mother, "We went there yesterday." Illa wanted to complain, but she knew her mother was right.

"Fine," she sighed, disappointed, "Let's head down to the stream." However when they reached the stream, they had a nasty sight. The water was brown and little black specks darted around in it. Illa snatched at one, hoping it was the waterweed she loved to eat. However, when she pulled it out of the stream it was an old can, rusty and wet. When she waited over to her favorite spot it was warm on her fur and she could feel things hitting her legs as they bobbed down the stream. She walked back to her mother.

"This doesn't look clean."

Her mother frowned. "We'll have to find clean water."

"Where?"

"There may be some downstream." her mother said. Illa was worried, but she knew that her mother was right. In unison, they turned and began the long hike. Illa and her mother slid through the undergrowth for the rest of the day, stopping only when they got hungry. Illa's mother found a spot that was a little less dirty than the rest of the stream and the two drank from this for the short time they were there. The next day Illa was wobbling on her legs and her mother had to make her walk. Two more days passed. Illa was farther from home than she had ever been before. At one point the two passed near a small village. One of the people saw Illa and when Illa tried to run she only stumbled. Soon it was the fifth day. They walked for a short time and soon the stream joined a great river, much bigger than the stream. However, the river was dirty as well. Finally they reached a large wall. Illa slowly hiked up the hill next to the wall. Illa wobbled, dizzy as she climbed. She felt awful. She stumbled, and her legs collapsed underneath her. Her head hurt. As she climbed to her feet she saw her mother collapse at the top, She crawled over to her, tired. then she saw the water. Clean, fresh, water. At last! She had to get her mother over to the water! Suddenly she heard a large rumbling noise. A large black dump truck filled with old cans and cartons rumbled towards the other side of the small lake of water. Illa's eyes widened. The truck moved backwards and dumped everything in the pond. Illa scrambled over to the water but by the time she reached it the water was murky, and the same color as the stream.

Illa saw black on the edges of her vision. Her head felt like it was made of lead. Her legs twitched uncontrollably and her skin was so parched that she was sure it would crack and splinter like wood. Her mouth was searching for water but could find none so it made her feel even more thirsty. There was an aching in her belly begging for food and water, though Illa was so weak she could probably not eat nor drink it anyway. Suddenly, she heard the tramp of footsteps. Out of the corner of her eye, She saw many people trudging towards her and her mother. They were holding long banners and signs. Illa struggled to read them. Earth day. What was earth day? Illa wondered this for exactly two seconds, before everything went black.

When Illa woke up again, she was in a small, green room. In the corner, her mother lay asleep. The room bounced, and her mother shifted. She got to her feet. The room bounced again then stopped. One of the walls slowly lowered itself to the ground and Illa stepped out onto the soft ground of her meadow. She darted away from the truck (first noticing the words **Wild Animal Recovery Center** written in bold along the side) and

darted down to the stream. She jumped in, and slurped up the now-clear water. Then she swam over to her favorite spot, vowing never to forget this fateful summer.