

serial survivors collection

She's too kind for
the end of times!

Myra

MIGHT
SURVIVE

best selling author
LIZ HAMBLETON

MYRA MIGHT SURVIVE

THE SERIAL SURVIVORS

BOOK 2

LIZ HAMBLETON

EDITED BY

BETH HUDSON INK

COVER DESIGN BY

K.B. BARRETT DESIGNS

LIZHAMBLETONBOOKS.LLC

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*To all the girls who were taken advantage of for being too nice.
Remember, Karma rarely misses.*

CONTENT WARNING

Before you read...

Myra Might Survive contains adult subject matter that may not be for everyone. If you are uncomfortable with explicit on-page romance, this book is not for you.

There are mentions of violence, the foster care system, and undead zombies that have sludge for blood. It's gross.

Be mindful when you read.

CHAPTER ONE



MYRA

Tips for surviving the apocalypse.

Number one. Share your food. You'll always find more.

Well, not always, but humans can go a long time without food. Weeks even. A person can get used to hunger, and the emptiness eventually goes numb, or at least it does for me. It's water that gets tricky. After three or four days without it, organs start to shut down, and you get confused and delirious, dropping dead around day six.

There's no greater feeling than tearing off a piece of bread and handing it to someone desperate to eat. That feeds me more than calories. We live next to a massive river, so I'm not worried as long as water is near. I'll find a meal eventually.

Number two. Give away your stuff if someone truly needs it.

Blankets, tampons, and hair ties aren't necessary, and I can go without them. The temperature's dropping, and while some can't handle the cold, nobody likes working with hair in their face. Periods are a nuisance, but I can do my laundry and figure it out.

I always say, "Treat others how you would like to be treated." I've never needed much, and that hasn't changed since monsters started roaming the earth. We're all terminal anyway, so why hoard what little is left?

Okay, so after you have no food, blankets, or toiletries, you need to, erm...

Oh, right. Number three! Learn to swim!

That's a big one, and unfortunately, I'm not following my own advice.

You see, the infected, zombie-like creatures roaming around outside are *not* good swimmers.

Not that I'm any better.

If I could safely find a houseboat and plant it out in the middle of the river, I think I'd be okay. They'd waddle to the shoreline, bloated bodies pumping black sludge for blood, gray eyes staring into nothing, until they spotted me and broke into a dead sprint, toppling into the water to drown. That seems to be their only weakness, but unfortunately, it's also mine.

I've never been in a pool long enough to learn. Once, I jumped a neighbor's fence with some kids from school to go skinny-dipping. It wasn't a neighbor, not really now that I think about it, because it wasn't my house next door. The Tenards lived there, and I had a room.

Wait, no.

I had a bunk with two other foster kids, not a room.

Anyway. Not my house, my neighbor, or my pool, but there I was, bottoms up over a decaying fence, getting a splinter in my right booty cheek.

I knew I couldn't swim, but I didn't think it would be too hard to figure out. Plus, the other girls had stolen a bottle of alcohol from Grandma Tenard and were meeting some boys there. When I said I would go, it was to keep an eye on them and make sure no one got hurt.

Turns out, I was the one needing looking after. I sank like a stone and woke up in the hospital two days later to an angry foster family and my social worker.

I shake my head to free myself of the memory and continue my mental list.

"Tip number three," I mumble to myself. "Must learn to swim."

"Myra." Lincoln snaps his fingers in front of my face a few times. "You're in space again."

"I wish." I force a smile and take the can of beans he hands me.

Sometimes there's no place to go except inside my head, and I'm great at thinking about lists and tasks. Taking action is where I falter.

Honestly, I'm the last person who should be writing a survival guidebook. By some miracle, I'm still alive, but only because I was at the right place at the right time and had some good luck.

I suppose these would be some good tips for staying alive in a crowded habitat with dozens of strangers. Years of foster kid life and co-mingling with new families gave me some skills in that department, and I'm adept at going along to get along.

The room buzzes around me, suddenly too loud after Lincoln's brought me back to reality. I tip the can back and let some beans slide into my mouth, watching the drooping Halloween decorations sway from the ceiling. It's been almost a month since that dreaded October 31st, but no one's clamoring to redecorate.

I chew slowly and lick my lips. "Honey baked. Wow. Pulling out the fancy stuff," I say. "Here you have some."

He swats the can away and taps on the bottom, urging me to eat more.

"Nothing but the best for you," Lincoln says with a grin. "And it's your last meal and all."

He's joking, but my stomach sinks. My face gives away my dread, and Lincoln wraps his arm around my shoulders. He's younger than me, but who isn't around here? Still, his strength and confidence ease my tension, and my shoulders relax.

"You won't have to swim," he promises. "The council has looked this over a hundred times."

"Oh, you're right about that," I tell him. "I won't swim. I'll drown."

Flashes of memory come back. A girl with black hair dives in first. Some kid is doing a cannonball into the water with his briefs still around his ankles. My foster mother refusing to enter my hospital room the next morning, screaming at the social worker that I wasn't worth the check.

Lincoln's reassuring me for the hundredth time that I won't have to swim when they set off their explosion, but that's not the only reason the council's

plan of attack upsets me.

We're safe here, nestled within the rooms and offices of the dam wall. It's a little cramped, and sure, some of us are sleeping in the maintenance closet, but it offers a nice humming sound that puts you right to sleep.

We were lucky to be trespassing when the world ended, and luckier, we were able to break into the control station of this dam, sealing ourselves off from the rest of the world. It's not perfect, but if I were anywhere else, I'd be a goner, and so would so many of the people here.

It doesn't matter what I think, though. They've decided, and all I can do is sit back and hope it's the right choice. Lincoln goes on about the greater good, but I've tuned him out, shoving cold beans down my throat so my stomach will stop growling. We are starving, but the council doesn't want to hear alternative solutions. They won't change their minds.

Lincoln's girlfriend, whose name I can never remember, makes her way over to us. I feel so bad about forgetting who she is, but names never stick with me. Why make a point to remember people if you leave them in a matter of weeks? It's a poor habit from childhood that I can't seem to shake.

I do my best to appear happy to see her, even when she pops her hip and scowls at us. Jealousy seeps from her every movement, but she pretends she's confident, making rounds through this place as if nothing is wrong.

Not that I blame her for the show.

Lincoln is a flirt, and I've caught him making out with other girls when she's not around. That's their business, not mine, but I wish he would cool it so she would take it down a notch.

Lincoln doesn't bother removing his arm, even when I raise my shoulder into his armpit and try to pull away. It's like he's trying to be rude to what's her name.

Gah, what is her name?

"Hi, Myra," she says, her voice dripping with disdain.

I may not have learned how to swim in any of my foster homes, but I figured out how to read people. Especially women. We're equally wonderful

and terrible to each other, and right now, this girl whose name I can't remember is leaning towards terrible.

"Hiya." I hide my mouthful of beans behind the can, trying not to be rude. "You look nice today."

She rolls her shoulders back and smirks. "Are you ready for Friday?"

What the H - E - double hockey sticks is her name?

Ashley? Beth? Crystal?

"It's got to be a waterfall explosion," she goes on. I'm still reciting names in alphabetical order as she continues. "I know you're afraid of water. Lincoln said you can't swim."

Donna? Eileen? Farrah?

"Give her a break, Bobbi."

Lincoln to the rescue!

"I'm not afraid of water under the right circumstances," I tell her. "I would kill for a bath right about now. You know what I mean?" I chuckle at myself and almost choke on a bean, coughing a few times while Lincoln pats me on the back.

Bobbi sighs, disgust written all over her face. She tries to pretend we aren't living in filth and hates the idea of not being the most attractive female around. There are only a dozen women, so it's not quite the crown she thinks it is, but good for her to have a hobby.

In truth, I think all women are beautiful, with or without a regular bath, but I don't think Bobbi agrees.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she sneers. "I take care of myself every day."

Bobbi's hair is brushed and braided. She carries around some toiletries, some of which I gave her, and uses them when she thinks no one is looking. I keep some toothpaste with me at all times, but I left my lip gloss and mascara behind on Halloween.

"You're a better woman than I," I say, wiping my mouth with the back of my sleeve.

"Than me," she corrects me.

“Oh, right. Thank you.”

She's wrong, but there's no need to be rude.

Lincoln's already standing, ushering her to move along. She gives him a kiss that lasts too long, making him, and anyone watching, uncomfortable. It takes a considerable effort not to upchuck my honey-baked bean dinner.

He pulls away when she tries to whisper something into his ear, and I wonder if he likes his girlfriend or is just afraid of being murdered in his sleep. It's a solid fear, and I don't blame him. We're all under a lot of stress, and it wouldn't take a lot for a woman to snap. Bobbi sways her hips as she walks away, and I let out a slow exhale, grateful the exchange is over.

Lincoln turns to me, arms crossed, and sighs. “She's not wrong about the—”

“I know. I know,” I interrupt him. “Do you think my intense fear of drowning would stop me from blowing up a dam that will flood a hundred miles in minutes? That would be silly. Fire away.”

“Do you trust me?” Lincoln asks.

“Sure,” I say and rise to stand. “We're friends.”

His eyes flash with something strange. Displeasure perhaps? He's disappointed in my answer, so I try again.

“I don't have a reason not to trust you,” I offer.

Not it, either. I'm still disappointing him with my answer. He breathes in through his nose and out through his mouth, slow and even.

“I need to hear you say it,” he says.

His arm snakes around my middle, and I turn to look for his girlfriend, whose name I already forgot again. If she sees him touching me, I'll be the person sleeping with one eye open. There's nothing for her to worry about, but the optics are not good.

“I trust you,” I say, my voice an octave too high. It's not a lie, exactly. I'm not someone who inherently distrusts people, is all. I believe that others are naturally good.

He grabs my chin and turns me to face him. That flash of unease is there again, but it fades when my eyes meet his.

“I do,” I repeat, keeping my voice calm. “Trust you.”

He releases me, and I take a step back.

“Good,” Lincoln says, pleased.

A familiar expression spreads across my face, one I’ve used a million times. It’s how I look at people when I want them to believe me, when I’m apprehensive or unsure of their intentions, but find myself at their mercy.

It’s how I get others to trust me.

I haven’t used it in this place. Not yet, but there’s something about this exchange that tells me Lincoln needs to know I’m on his side.

I’ve known him for a month, and in that time, he’s never grabbed me like this or demanded obedience. It’s odd, but all I can do is adjust and change with the environment I’m in.

He flashes me a grin, and I add to my mental list.

Tip number four for surviving the apocalypse.

Know who’s in charge, and never let them doubt it.

CHAPTER TWO



MYRA

Lincoln insists he should walk me to my sleeping bunk, and I'm not in a position to decline.

A few teenagers from the night watch walk toward us and wave. They don't look Lincoln in the eye as they do me, and I find myself analyzing this, wondering if I've missed something about him.

"Hello," I say as they approach, fairly certain the redhead is named Lydia, but I don't chance it. I've been teaching them history in my spare time, and they enjoy the lessons.

When education isn't forced or used to pit kids against one another, it's enjoyable. I haven't asked if it's something we could continue on the outside, but I hope it doesn't end. Everyone needs a purpose, and teaching is something I can offer.

Unless it's swim lessons. That I cannot do.

"You know you're safe with me," Lincoln says.

"Oh, okay." I'm unsure how to respond or what he wants to hear, so I keep my responses light.

He takes the empty can from my hands and chucks it in a nearby trash can.

“I’m this way,” I say. “I’d better get going.” Sleep is always a wonderful escape, and I don’t need him to tuck me in. “You better go after... her,” I blank on his girlfriend’s name again, but Lincoln doesn’t appear to notice. “She’s probably waiting for you down the hall.”

“You know I’ve offered you lessons,” Lincoln replies, ignoring my hint about his girlfriend.

“Lessons?”

“The infected can’t swim,” Lincoln reminds me. “We could go out to the river at night. It would be safe-ish.”

The idea of Lincoln and me out in the dark together, bobbing in the water, sopping wet, doesn’t sit right. My stomach gets queasy, and a lump forms in my throat.

“Safe-ish is not a word,” I joke. “Your girlfriend would love to correct your grammar on that.”

Ever since she found out I was a teacher, she’s begun a one-sided battle to prove I’m stupid. If that helps her, I don’t mind, but I wish she would find something better to do.

“She won’t be a problem much longer,” he retorts.

I’m too nervous to ask what that means, and my stomach sinks. Every second of this exchange is torture, and I’m desperate for it to end.

“Offer is always there,” he adds, veering down another hallway. I exhale, knowing my escape is imminent.

“No thanks,” I say. “I trust you will keep me dry when the time comes.”

A teenager walking by gives me an awkward look, which I rightfully deserve for that comment.

“I didn’t mean...” I trail off, unsure what to say to him. Everyone around here is constantly thinking about sex, so of course, his mind went there. It’s the last thing I’m concerned with, but I should’ve known better.

I turn on my heel and groan, unsure of what just transpired between Lincoln and me, and wondering how much it matters. We will blow this place to smithereens in a few days anyway, so best not to dwell.

“Lights out!” someone yells.

The generator's humming stops, and darkness fills the space. It takes a minute for my eyes to adjust, and I make it to the wall, feeling until I get to the doorframe. The long corridors and hidden rooms of this place once felt like a maze, but in the weeks since the infected came, we've memorized our way around.

This place we call home was once full of offices and labs, a space for people to work. Cabinets hold brochures, manuals for the dam, and donation envelopes – all of it relics from another time.

The best and worst thing about our sanctuary is its seclusion. We're safe, hidden inside the cement hull that holds the river at bay, but it's isolated. That presents its own list of dangers, with lack of food being the largest. With nearly fifty of us, hungry and crammed together, we're all feeling the strain.

I won't sleep tonight even though my belly is full for the first time in a week. I've volunteered for so many night shifts that I can't get my circadian rhythm back. My body never knows if it's coming or going, and by the time I make it to my pallet on the floor, I'm spinning with thoughts.

The dread of what's coming keeps my mind whirling, refusing to let me rest. Add in the moaning and assorted sex noises echoing through these close quarters, and I'm in for an all-nighter. Apparently, taking a night off isn't an option, and at this rate, someone's bound to end up pregnant, if they aren't already.

I miss the beginning of the apocalypse when people had some sense of privacy. Now they poop in a bucket while you're mid-conversation and think nothing of it.

The end of the world has been full of fun new adventures.

I keep trying to sleep, tossing and turning on my little cot, but I know I've been awake for hours when the moon's light slices across the ceiling.

My back pops as I stretch, giving up on sleep. The earlier rustling has faded to soft snores, never true silence with ten of us crammed in here. I picked this room for its rare window, and after a lifetime of sharing space, the crowd doesn't bother me much.

Some people took a while to adjust to our cramped way of life. The noise alone can overwhelm them, and then there's the smell. It's not like we're all walking around with toothpaste and deodorant in our pockets.

I never had my own space, and even in adulthood, I had roommates. I suppose I got used to the communal lifestyle because living alone never crossed my mind. There were a few good homes over the years, but I never lucked out finding a family as a baby, and then I got older, and well, everyone wanted a puppy.

"You're double digits, kid," my social worker would tell me. "Twice the number and twice the problem."

She wasn't very nice, but there's a ninety-nine percent chance she's dead or a monster because karma rarely misses. I think about an infected person changing her, her veins bulging, dark liquid pouring from her mouth and eyes, and I shiver.

No, I don't wish that fate on anyone. The idea of spending one's existence as a bloated ogre with black sludge for blood makes my skin crawl and my stomach churn.

Tonight, my thoughts feel unbearable. They press on my chest, a heaviness from all these people depending on me not to freak out when I need to do my part. I could say I'm just as worried about them, but that'd be a lie. What's strange is I'm not scared of the plan failing. I'm scared of what happens if it succeeds.

There are fifty of us here, but there could be thousands in the way of the flooding we'll cause by blowing up this dam. Yes, it will wipe out the infected along the way, but who else could we hurt? All for what? Safe foraging followed by the hope that we stumble across another refuge.

The council says everyone is dead, but they don't know. They can't possibly be sure, and in my heart, I know they don't care.

What if I didn't do it?

I don't have much to lose, and I never did. I don't have any parents, and I never created a family for myself over the years. No kids, and my longest

relationship lasted about six months. I switch schools every few years, never too close to a co-worker or a town.

Next month, I turn twenty-ten. That's what one of my foster parents used to say about her birthday, and I chuckle at the thought. She'd make macaroni and cheese with real cheese, and I'd fight an infected for a bowl of that tonight.

Thirty.

I'm the oldest person here.

That's because at midnight on Halloween, most thirty-year-olds are asleep after a busy night of trick-or-treating with their kids. That or they go to a party with other thirty-somethings that ends at a reasonable hour because, well, we're thirty and we're tired.

Thirty-year-olds don't trespass on state property to check on their students who might be making poor decisions and participating in underage drinking by a large body of water.

I grumble to myself and sit up in bed, dragging my feet along the floor until I find my shoes. Feeling along the walls in the dim light, I make my way to the stairwell.

It's fifteen flights up to the lookout at the top of the dam, and I curse myself for being unable to sleep with every step.

Darn conscience. A lot of good it's done me over the years.

Lincoln's on watch tonight, his girlfriend likely curled up in the twin bunk she insists they share. Stepping outside, the wind whips my hair around my face, and I have a flicker of regret for giving away all of my hairbands.

The moon is full, and I see there are maybe a dozen people stretched along the walkway, all of them staring out at the nothingness below. It's usually two or three, but we're getting closer to when the infected circle back.

We've learned to track their movements, to know when they're coming. They're like a horde of giant zombies, though I'm pretty sure brains aren't on the menu. One touch is enough to turn you, black blood flooding your veins