

Praise for
THE FOREST OF EVERGREEN:
Found in the Wilderness

Bandiola returns with a sequel guaranteed to wrench reader's emotional heartstrings. Sophia's story continues to steer readers' minds and hearts as the second book reveals the answers to the mysteries surrounding the first book.

Secrets after shocking secrets came haunting the already chaotic lives of the characters. As the book progresses, each character reveals far more layers, questioning everything you thought you knew about them. As lies and secrets began to be uncovered, more questions and more speculations are being raised.

Emotional and intense! The Forest of Evergreen: Found in the Wilderness is an emotionally-charged novel filled with shocking revelations, appealing multi-dimensional characters, and suspenseful plot. Bandiola's exploration of family relationships, forbidden love, and self-introspection is compelling and complex, leaving readers craving for more of Bandiola's touch.

If you loved the first book, you will surely be captivated by Bandiola's evocative and highly-engaging sequel. Prepare to be swept off your feet and get lost once again to the magic of the Forest of Evergreen.

-Jeslen Tesoro, author and winner of Asianfanfics 2014

Praise for
THE FOREST OF EVERGREEN:
Found in the Wilderness

Book 2 is as surprising as Book 1. Love for the story creeps up on you, until you feel you can not let go. At first, it seems like just another fantasy story between a man and a woman, but when the reader comes to the main theme of the book , which is "Love does not demand its own way," the reader realizes she/he is not just holding another self-centered, selfish little piece about juvenile love and all the modern millennial trappings of so-called bratty, and twisted romance. I urge the readers to find out a little about themselves in this new book, and to know, like Sophia, what it feels like to be 'Found' and to truly belong. The fulfilling way.

-Renee Grace Amour V. Juliano, Editor in LinkEds & Writers

THE FOREST
OF EVERGREEN:

Found in the Wilderness

Book Two

TERESA MAY B. BANDIOLA

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This book is for my family and Eri Yunson,
for inspiring me always.

I can never find the right words to express
my deepest love for all of you.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

As I stated in Book One of this series, I created a mythical country as the setting of the story, which is located between Guam and Hawaii. I am a Filipino author and I haven't quite experienced yet the four seasons of weather that is why it would be difficult for me to describe them in my writing (like how snow falls in winter or how plants and trees begin to grow in the spring). So I chose a geographic location where I could relate to, much like my home country, and that was somewhere in the Pacific Ocean near the equator, where only rainy and sunny seasons happen.

I am a proud Filipino, and you will notice that our culture, traditions, history, and even our witticisms are reflected in my writing. I pursued it as a gesture of love and respect for my home country, and in the hope of bringing a fresh backdrop to international readers.

In Book One, I hadn't stated much about the origin of the outlandish creatures, the *Vangkekans*, because I was in the middle of an extensive research on how to make them realistically based, (and not just the typical fictional characters like westernized vampires or werewolves, but creatures that could actually be supported by History, Biology, Philosophy, and even Astro-Physics).

Now that I have gathered enough information to tell their origin, they will now be mentioned in the Prologue of this book. Certainly, some readers won't be open to some of the details but this book is only a product of fiction, after all.

Appendices A and B of this book describe the fictional country setting and the strange creatures respectively, while Appendix C defines the strange words found throughout the story. The three appendices are excerpts from Book One and were added only here, for the reader's reference.

I hope you'll enjoy reading the story and learn some lessons from it, as I did.

It (love) does not demand its own way.

-1 Corinthians 13: 5 NLT

SYNOPSIS

THIS IS THE SECOND PART OF THE FOREST OF EVERGREEN SERIES.

The first part, *Lost in the Wilderness*, narrated that Sophia Vabueretti suffered from memory loss because of a car accident, which also claimed the life of her boyfriend, Giovanni (while it caused lesser injuries to her best friend, Zarah, and her brother, Alex, who joined them in the car at the time). The accident happened on their way home after joining the Battle of the Bands, in the summer before their senior year of high school.

However, Sophia's childhood flame, Jericho (now a new and very young doctor), came into her life again, carrying a stronger love for her, a love that knew no boundaries.

Though Sophia was in oblivion, old sparks with Jericho blazed on again, in the company of Sophia's diaries which mostly accounted for her unsettling love for him.

Their relationship was greatly objected to by Sophia's parents, who were influenced by Grandma Lucy (who condemned Jericho as a jinx in Sophia's life).

Against all odds, the two eloped to Forest Green until Jericho and Sophia ended up hiding in the Vabueretti lake house. When her family found out, they asked the police to arrest him which made the two run into the dark forest. That night, while escaping, Jericho accidentally stepped on a rock and lost his consciousness, while Sophia, shockingly, fell from a high cliff. While she was falling, someone suddenly caught her. It was Abanir, an outlandish creature that soon captivated Sophia's heart. But it was not Abanir's first time to see her. He had seen her before, at the lake house, where Sophia spent a bonfire night with her family. Sophia saw him, too, at that time, and was thinking that her senses had deceived her that night.

After rescuing Sophia from falling, Abanir brought her to the Kravena Tribe (which is found at the Forest of Evergreen) together with his personal servant, Rabel. Without a doubt, Abanir's regal parents were very shocked to see their son with a human. But humans were not new to them. They had a clash with them before, which included Sophia's doctor-grandfather who had led a scientific quest into the mysterious wild forest.

While in Kravena, Sophia remembered Jericho and she escaped to be with him again. But then, a strange animal, resembling a huge and wild pig, attacked her. Abanir saved her life once again and he flew her to Harem Falls, just as Sophia lost consciousness. It was now night when Sophia got her consciousness back and she had no choice but to spend the night there with Abanir and Rabel.

Unexpectedly, a spark formed between her and Abanir, that flickered along with the fires of the night. The following day, Abanir's enemies, the Sulabun and Fegratu Tribes, attacked Kravena without any warning. Because of this, Abanir had to return Sophia back to the lake house where he first saw her. Not to be seen by

humans (particularly Sophia's family), Abanir landed her near the lake. Out of the blue, Abanir kissed her in the lips, a happening that confused Sophia's heart, further.

At that juncture, Jericho, at last, found Sophia. Then he surrendered himself to the sheriffs, and was charged with kidnapping her. He could be put to jail because Sophia was not yet at the legal age of eighteen.

Tormented, Sophia was now caught between the man of her childhood dalliance (who had always loved her) and an outlandish creature that she just met (but had saved her life, twice).

Grandma Lucy gave Sophia two choices: either to stay in Forest Green with Jericho but Jericho will be behind bars forever, or to go back to Orlando City with her parents so that Jericho would be freed from jail.

Sophia agreed to return to Orlando but her heart was breaking. Along with those throbbing tears was the torment who weighed more heavily: Was it Abanir or Jericho?

This second part, *Found in the Wilderness*, now tells how Sophia continued her life in the city, but was brought back to Forest Green for her Grandma Lucy's seventy-sixth birthday. However, prior to Grandma Lucy's birthday celebration, shocking family secrets were revealed, secrets that could disturb Sophia's sense of identity and her renewed relationship with Jericho.

PROLOGUE

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THE VANGKEKAN ORIGIN

In the beginning, long after the Great Flood, creatures outside the Planet Earth collected ten slaves from the riverbanks of Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates, and brought them to the paradise now known as The Forest of Evergreen in the remote town of Forest Green, Orstia, Great Archipelago of Philipdomia.

The ten were composed of five pairs of males and females and were subjected to genetic mutation by these unearthly creatures. As a result, the ten had grown a pair of wings at their backs (with varied colors) and had abundance of distinct stem cells that contributed to their immortality and exceptional strength. They were then called the Vangkekans (from the ancient alien language meaning “reborn”).

The extraterrestrials allotted five tribes for the five male slaves to protect and lead the entire paradise and be called as follows:

Datu Ilak The White of Kravena Land,
Datu Karok The Dusky of Sulabun,
Datu Saak The Red of Fegratu,
Datu Intal The Green of Asuldán, and
Datu Uliman The Brown of Kumanggi.

Each datu was assigned a spouse from the other five remaining female slaves. However, one female did not survive the genetic mutation and had died. She was supposedly the partner of Datu Ilak of Kravena. Hence, Datu Ilak was the only datu who had no immediate descendants.

For further procreation, the unearthly creatures gathered additional pairs of slaves from the middle east. There was peace and order. Growth and survival. Then, the ancient aliens thought of an army to prepare the Vangkekans for the *rupture*, and decided to bring more slaves. Yet again, they were subjected to genetic mutation. There were batches of slaves from the south, now known as South Africa. Some were from the east, in the south, now known as India. Some were from the *beautiful mountain* in South America, now called the Andes Mountains. The last group was from old Babylon. One of them was Banaak, who was consigned to assist Datu Ilak, while the extraterrestrials were searching for the perfect match for Datu Ilak (as he was the superior and most special among the five datus).

But that was the time when the ancient aliens did not return yet (and probably still searching).

However, the Mountains of Yandal served as the land mark for the ancient aliens' space crafts. The mark is still standing today, in a form of a circle consisting of twelve separate rigid stone walls, while at the center was a small circle with four feet.

No one on Earth knows about its existence because the Forest of Evergreen was protected by an electrical field, and is the reason why it isn't easily penetrated. The soil in the land had anti-toxin to

protect the forest from any strange object, animate or inanimate, and the plants were ever-changing to confuse any stranger from entering. However, these plants, like the Ula-ula in Kravena (which was mentioned in Book 1), contained the substance resin that could heal wounds easily (like what Sophia experienced in Book 1).

The ancient aliens were in need of gold, which was more abundant in Mount Kalban than in any other place on Earth. (In Book 1, it was mentioned that Mount Kalban belonged to Jericho's family, and Jericho's grandfather sold it to a mining company.)

(Mount Kalban was abandoned when it caused the running out of Ovaweh Falls, which was the antidote for the deadly arrows, and the one responsible for restoring the Vangkekans' immortality because of the scientific manipulation on the water done by the extraterrestrials. Its abandonment was one of the reasons why these intelligent life forms left and went to other places or galaxy for an alternative supply.)

But before the ancient aliens left, they were able to earmark a symbol for each datu. These symbols were of the heavenly bodies, so that the ancient aliens would always be remembered by the datu. These heavenly bodies were the ones that first fascinated each datu, upon landing on paradise (mentioned in Book 1):

The bright sun for Datu Ilak,
The twinkling star for Datu Saak,
The half-full moon for Datu Karok,
The crescent moon for Datu Intal, and
The full moon for Datu Uliman.

At the rigid stone monuments around the secreted hot spring (where the deadly arrows were dipped to kill an immortal Vangkekan) was a set of picture symbols carved by the ancient aliens. Only the five datu, if together, could decode its meaning upon the aliens' return. Yet none of these spearheads knew of that return. No clues were left for them.

Now, the Vangkekans had to live, together, peaceably, and must keep on. They believed in One Invisible God, not the sun, not the moon, not the stars, or anything crawling, flying, or floating on land or on the water. These ancient benevolent aliens left them believing in One God, The One who's outside time and space. He comes in the form of Energy, has Life, and is oh, so Almighty!

The Vangkekans were taught to survive, believe, and wait—wait for that one thing the ancient benevolent aliens didn't elaborate, but which, according to them, was for the good of all.

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