

# Rise and fall

**"This is a beautiful place—who knew it even existed? Thanks, Mum."**

It all started on my birthday. Mum came into my room, grinning, and handed me a blindfold. "You're going to throw a dart at this map," she said. I didn't argue—I just went with it. The dart hit a tiny island off the coast of America called **Sousa**.

"Pack your bags," Mum said. "You'll be there in six hours."

Six hours later, we were on a boat. The ride was rough—long, windy, and uncomfortable—but as soon as the island came into view, everything changed. The water turned crystal blue, the beaches were golden, and the trees looked untouched.

We stepped off the boat, unsure where to go. My sister Mile wandered ahead and soon found a hidden town tucked between the hills. It was small and welcoming—everyone smiled, waved, and seemed to know each other. They even gave us a tour: tiny markets, handmade crafts, and colorful houses filled with people. By evening, they offered us a room at a seaside inn.

The next morning, we set off on an adventure. We hiked through green valleys and crossed shimmering lagoons, building makeshift bridges to get across. On the other side, just as the sun began to rise, we saw something magical—hot air balloons lifting into the sky, their colors glowing in the golden light

We rushed toward them, and the villagers invited us into one for a ride. As we lifted off the ground, the island unfolded beneath us. Forests, beaches, hills, and the sparkling ocean—it felt like flying through a dream.

I turned to Mum and said, "This really is the best birthday ever."

And it truly was.