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CBS reality TV star Ashley Trainer tells all

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SHE'S A SURVIVOR

MAPLE GROVE'S ASHLEY TRAINER BATTLES THE ELEMENTS AND BACKSTABBERS TO COMPETE ON ONE OF TELEVISION'S MOST POPULAR REALITY SHOWS.

HOW SHE GOT THE SURVIVOR GIG

Ashley applied to be on CBS's *Amazing Race* last February. The network called her back and asked if she'd instead want to be an alternate for *Survivor*. If you're interested in your own reality adventure, go to cbs.survivor.com and request an application.

One couldn't help but notice the comfort that radiated off 22-year-old Ashley Trainer. Two weeks stranded on an island getting doused in cold rain, battling sleep deprivation on bruising bamboo and gagging on slug guts has a way of putting things into perspective. So when she sipped on her coffee at Starbucks in her hometown of Maple Grove, *Survivor: Samoa's* youngest contestant—and the sixth castaway voted off—was all smiles as she reflected on what she called the “best experience” of her life.

BH: What was the toughest part of being on the island?

AT: The rain. It's weird because you're soaking wet, you're freezing, and you can't get away. It was supposed to be dry season in Samoa; I looked it up before I left. But it was nowhere near dry season. I mean, we had rain for four days straight. It was absolute torture.

BH: How did those conditions make the sleeping arrangements?

AT: You're not really sleeping, but you kind of go in and out of rest. The nights that it's not raining, you're freezing. But when it's raining, it's so much worse. You literally get no sleep at all. You just lay there because you're getting poured on. We slept on bamboo, which is torture. You can't sleep on the ground because of the bugs, and there are snakes, crabs and rats. So you don't want to sleep on the ground because you'll get eaten up, but the ground would've been way more comfortable. It was horrible. By the time I left, I had bruises on my arms, my ribs and my hips because it's just straight-up bamboo.

BH: What did you expect going in, and how did it play out in comparison to those expectations?

AT: I thought it would be a lot easier than it actually was. I don't know why. But you watch it on TV, and you kind of have this idea of what it's going to be like, and then you're actually there, and it's so much different than what you can even imagine. It's hard. Your body goes into shock when you get there because you're not eating, you're not drinking and you're not sleeping, so you don't know how your body is going to react. You're a completely different person.

BH: What was your favorite part about being there?

AT: I really enjoyed playing the game. That was my favorite. I absolutely loved just being able to play because I'm a huge fan of the show. So just being able to strategize and see how it all played out, that was the best part.

BH: What were your relationships like when you were there?

AT: They put you with a bunch of people you know you're not going to get along with because everyone has these crazy personalities, and everyone is completely different from you. I developed friendships that will last a lifetime, but I also developed some friend-

ships with people that I absolutely hate and can't stand now because I think they're horrible people.

BH: On that note, how did you view your relationship with Russell? *Russell Hantz, a 36-year-old oil company owner from Texas, played nice to all the contestants' faces but connived behind their backs, admitting to*

trying to make life as miserable as possible for everybody. He called Ashley the “dumb short-haired blonde.”

AT: Russell was really good to my face. He was a really nice guy, he was kind of fun around camp, and he would go get our food. But I was watching it when everyone else was watching it, so I'm realizing what everyone else is: how horrible he is. He's said these really negative things behind our backs. It's hurtful, but at the same time, you know he's playing a game. But I think he crossed a line he shouldn't have crossed because he didn't need to say those things to make himself go further in the game.

BH: I can't help but ask: Can you bring us through your encounter with the sea slug guts smoothie? *For a food challenge in the fifth episode—the one in which Ashley was voted off—the members of each team had to spin the wheel and drink an obscure smoothie made from “questionable” ingredients. Ashley was the only one on her team who couldn't finish.*

AT: I ended up with the worst (smoothie) out there; even (host Jeff Probst) said that. It was sea slug guts; he hardly blended it and mixed it with water and garnished it with sardines. It was really chunky and horrible. I've never tasted anything so horrible in my life. I got almost all of it down, and then my body just started rejecting it. I'd take a little and it would come right back up. It was horrible. I don't think that was the reason I got voted off but a lot of people do. I don't think it was because there were so many different aspects that you don't see because you're playing the game constantly. But I didn't get mine down, and I think my tribe saw that as a weakness. And I thought I was going to be a strong one in that challenge because I'm a very experimental eater.

BH: What did you learn from your experience on *Survivor*?

AT: People look at me—I'm small, I'm blonde, and I'm a female—and they automatically think that I'm weak and I can't accomplish anything. I learned how strong I actually am. I have done things that I never thought I could ever do in my life. I'm so proud of myself. I can do anything; I really think I can now. It's a good feeling. //

For the extended Q&A with Ashley, go to maplegrovemag.com