

With me Always

The ocean waves splashed around my ankles as I stood at the edge of the shoreline. I take a step forward, but I'm still shallow enough that the cool ocean water can't reach my worn, rolled up jeans. The wind howls around me, and whips my long, strawberry blonde hair in my face. I look around and see the familiar high cliffs hanging over the sandy beach and the old steps built into them that I've gone up and down thousands of times. I can see my mom's house, at the top of the cliffs, where we live together.

I'm different from other girls my age. I have a weird, special connection with the ocean. Some days I almost feel like I'm a part of the whole thing. Nobody understands how I feel. I just want to dive into the white crested waves and become the ocean. I'm the best swimmer my age. I never mind the cold, salty waters. I will always go to the beach. Every day. Some days it'll be pouring rain, but that doesn't matter to me. I will even come if there's a hurricane going on outside. Not that that's ever happened before.

I glance at my watch. 5:56. I had promised my mom that I would be home by six for supper. I sigh, turn around, and slip on my shoes. I wish I could stay at the beach, with the ocean, the crashing of the waves, the howling of the wind, the grainy feel of the sand on my feet...

I try to walk slowly, savoring every moment I can be here. I reach the steps, the rope railings on either side of the steps worn and

tired from constantly being whipped and beaten by the ferocious winds in my town, Willow Waters. I grab on, the old rope scratching my hands, and pull myself up, one step at a time, until I reach the top. Me and my mom's old character house stood looking cozy, warm, and inviting. It's a pale blue, two story house with a wraparound porch, and every type of plant and flower you could imagine decorating the front yard of the house, the porch, and all around into their backyard.

I clomp up the steps to the porch and bang open the door. "Alex?" my mom asks. "Yeah mom?" I reply. "Oh nothing, just checking if it was you". My mom is a tall woman with strawberry blonde hair to match mine, but hers is a little darker. She has a flowy top on, and dark jeans.

"After supper may I go back to the beach?" I beg. She lets out a loud sigh, specifically so I can hear it, and I roll my eyes. "You spend too much time at that silly beach. What about friends and family?" my mom asks in her usual stern voice. "Please mom, please?" I try again. "Look, honey..." she says, taking a seat on the couch. She pats the spot beside her motioning for me to sit down. I flop down beside her, like a rag doll. She sighs again. This is getting to be a habit for her. "I'm thinking that maybe we could move somewhere, maybe in the same town as your cousins..." she says slowly. I jump up, knocking over the flower vase on the coffee table. It hits the floor with a loud crash and I see my mother cringe.

“NO!”, I scream. “I WON'T LEAVE WILLOW WATERS! WHAT ABOUT DAD!?”. I bolt for the door, slamming it behind me, and run outside. The tears are already running down my face. I can't leave. This is my home. The ocean is here, my mom is here, nana and papa are here, and the memory of my dad is here. I may be overreacting, but I don't care. I fly down the steps again, and land in a heap at the bottom of the stairs and cry.

My dad died when I was nine. He had cancer. Now, three years later, that fact that he's gone still haunts me everyday. I miss his smile so much, and his big green eyes that always looked at me with so much love and proudness. The wind rocks me to sleep. When I wake up, a while later, my mom is sitting beside me staring out at the waves.

“M-mom”. I cry. I see the tears filling her eyes. I fling myself into her arms and we cry together. “I know it's hard honey”, she starts. “I wish your dad was still here more than anything. But he would want us to be strong for him. And even though he's not here with us right now he is still watching over us.” I nod. “I know mom”. She smiles weakly.

“Do you know why you love the ocean so much?” she asks. I shake my head. The only thing I know is that I love it, but never why. She strokes my forehead with her ring finger, and then starts playing with my hair. “Because, Alex, your dad did too”. “Huh?” Now I'm confused. “He told me that when he was gone, his spirit would live on with the ocean”. My mom says with a sadness in her eyes. I know how much they loved each other. “Wait, so dad's spirit is in

the ocean!?” I say, and my eyes are probably popping out of my head. She laughs, confirming the fact that my face probably looks really funny right now. “Yes. Or at least that's what he wanted. And when you started loving it so much all of a sudden, well, I was pretty sure it was your dad's doing”.

“So no matter how sad you feel, just know he is always with us. Always”. I look to the ocean. It might be my imagination, but I think I see my dad's face in the waves. His wise, green eyes, his wrinkles right above his left eye that I always used to trace. He flashes his warm comforting smile at me, and then he's gone. “M-mom did you see that?” I ask. “See what honey?” she replies. “Oh, nothing”. I say. I smile and look at the crashing waves. “I love you dad”. I whisper. I snuggle closer to my mom and close my eyes. No matter what, I know he is right here with me. Always.