

Dive Deeper

“Casey, over here!” Billie cried, her dark auburn hair lashing around her face in the wind. “Billie! Come back!” I shouted, trying my best to be louder than the screeching gulls overhead. I raced forward, slicing my foot on a barnacle in a shallow pool. I winced, but this was no time for self-pity. “Billie, get back here right now!” I shouted again. Billie was not supposed to be on Marine Iguana Beach. It was dangerous and rocky, and she was only six. Besides, the upcoming storm was getting harsher by the second. Dad had trusted me to keep her safe for two hours. I was very bad at it, for she’d instantly raced off into the soon-to-be sunset as soon as Dad’s tires started moving on the road.

“Don’t be boring!” Billie shouted back at me. “I want to have fun. Isn’t it just so beautiful?” Billie still hadn’t learned to not do whatever she wanted just because it was ‘fun’.

“Please come back! I’ll pay you ten dollars!” I bribed desperately. Billie was running over to the edge of the cliff. If she fell, she’d hit extremely deep, icy, and stormy water below, that is if she didn’t fall onto a large rock first.

“It’s so pretty! I want to see the cliff!” Billie insisted.

“No.” I refused sternly. “Get back here right now or you’re in big trouble, missy.”

Billie paid me no heed and continued on until she was just seconds away from a shockingly-high drop.

“It’s so lovely! I want to jump in...” Billie trailed off. I was a while behind her, practically limping. The cut on my foot was deep.

“Please, don’t do this to me!” I pleaded. “Come back and I won’t speak of it again.”

Billie edged closer to the cliff’s end. “It’s awesome...”

My heart raced when she got so close, not even noticing. “Just back away a little bit, at least!” I screamed.

“Why? Am I—“ Billie stepped off. I screamed. She screamed. I ran forward to the cliff, barely hesitating to dive off.

The water was wild and freezing. All I saw was darkness and bubbles. I was already feeling so out of breath - I needed to swim to the surface. I propelled myself forward, but a small hand gripped my arm violently.

“Billie!” I gurgled. The hand fell away. “Billie!” I could hardly hear my choked voice in the thick water, and so I doubted Billie even knew it was me she’d held. Terrified, I let out a bit of my breath to sink more and find Billie, but all I saw was the dark, swirling water. I stared upward, suddenly feeling like I was drowning. I tried to swim up, but crashing waves held me down. *No no no no no no no....* Suddenly, the water cleared. What appeared to be a tail glittered in the sunlight above the ocean. *Wait, sunlight above? But it’s dark and stormy!* Long, thick hair twirled and swirled in the water. The tail was swiftly stroking through the water, and whatever it was, it was clinging tightly to something else. Something smaller. Then, they disappeared towards the surface.

I felt weak, almost limp, in the cold, airless abyss. But in a way, I felt at peace...*No! No! No!* I remembered Billie grabbing my arm, then sinking away. I had to live for her. I couldn’t abandon my frightened little sister now. I tried to swim, but barely made it an inch. “Please.” I whispered to the water, feeling my life slip away from my grasp, like the water I was in. “Please.”

A cold, yet full-of-life, hand gripped my hand tightly. I looked up, and saw the waving hair glisten in the sunlight. *Sunlight.* A silky, smooth body that shimmered in the water pushed upward, and I caught a glimpse of a shining tail.

Before I knew it, I was lying on a rocky beach, coughing up salty water. The sun was warm, and beside me lay this little girl. My sister.

"Billie!" I burst out, hugging her shivering body tightly. "Billie, you're okay!" The storm seemed to have ceased before its peak. I noted this, examining the sky.

"Casey, I'm so sorry!" Billie cried.

I took in a big breath of fresh air. "We should go home."

Dad came home to his soaking daughters and immediately asked what had happened. I told him about how Billie raced away, fell into the ocean, and how I dove in after.

"So, was it a current that saved you?" Dad gasped, when I finished telling my story. Before I could respond, Billie shook her head. "Casey saved me!" she gushed, respect and gratitude enlightening her quivering voice.

I paused. "No, I didn't." I said, after a long moment of silence. "I was drowning myself."

Billie furrowed her eyebrows. "But I felt you take me to shore!"

Memories flooded back into my head. "That wasn't me." I whispered. "I was also saved."

Dad looked terribly confused. "Okay, how did you guys swim to shore?" he asked.

Billie and I exchanged glances. "She had lovely hair." Billie murmured.

"And a sparkling tail." I whispered.

Dad hesitated. "Are you telling me you guys almost died, but a mermaid rescued you?"