

# Ocean Daydream

by Deanna Williamson

She stood, alone, inside the musky funeral home, surrounded by unfamiliar music that echoed around her scattered mind. Footsteps resounded in the hallway in front of her as she waited in silence.

“Our sincere condolences.” The undertaker’s deep and melodic voice was almost inaudible amongst the thoughts that shattered her wish for a different reality. The weight of the Urn was heavier than she anticipated when he handed it to her. It bounced down like a pendulum and then up again as she regained her balance. She closed her eyes and could vividly imagine the warmth of his hand on her shoulder. She took a slow breath in, blinking back the hot tears that threatened her mascara.

“Thank you,” she smiled sweetly at him, then quickly turned to the door before uninvited tears wet her face.

A windy gust swept into the stale air as she opened the door. Bells tied to it chimed goodbye and she muffled uncontrolled sobs. Suddenly kneeling on the sidewalk next to the ashes of her husband, she remembered holding his hand as he surrendered to the hospital bed. They had just told her that he was going home to hospice after a short six-month cancer fight. Trapped in a dull white room with doctors rushing about, she wiped a tear from his face and grabbed his hands intently. His eyes were closed, but he squeezed her hand to reassure.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked hesitantly.

“You were sneaking me out of the E.R.” he smiled.

She played along, “I opened the door to the ocean...”

“In the moonlight,” he added. With his eyes still gently closed, he asserted intently, “You’re beautiful.”

She cried silently; her soul shaken to the core. He touched her face, softly, while she interlocked her fingers with his and she stared painfully at their wedding rings. Kissing the palm of his hand, she remembered the vibrant painting of the ocean on the wall of the oncologist’s office. The scene beckoned with an ethereal rainbow of blue hues, sparkling in waves that wandered into a moonlit horizon. The beach of white sand glittered with dim light, as the rounded pebbles were mirrored in the swash.

She looked up at his dark green eyes which had quickly opened to her heartbreak and met hers like it were the first time. The butterflies in her stomach fluttered up into her lungs and she let out a sigh. “Do you remember the day that we got married? The train?”

He laughed, “Yes, our wedding bells!” As the pastor began the ceremony, a train horn interrupted his first sentence with three, lyrical blows. At the very end of the wedding ceremony, right before the long-awaited kiss, another train horn blew the same contributing whistle. The pastor deemed the train, that day, their wedding bells.

“That day was just the beginning, like this one can be.” She struggled with her words as her voice trembled, “I’m not letting you go, yet.”

His eyes turned down towards the rough hospital bed sheet and he grasped at the concept, “God will do,” he paused in contemplation, “what God will do, and we still have right now.” God’s love held them both tenderly in that moment. Fear of their newly uncharted waters calmed into waves of peace and quiet.

Her memory broke, “Mom, are you okay?” She opened her eyes to the bright light of the sun, squinting up at her son’s outstretched hand. His young hands looked just like his dad’s. He helped her off the sidewalk and picked up his father’s ashes.

“It’s heavier than I thought,” he observed. “Maybe we should go the ocean.”