

## Returning Home

It really wasn't the result I was looking for. As the train ploughed on through the emerald valley, I couldn't help but admire the tranquil landscape as I pondered over what I'd done. Leaving the sleepy London suburbs hadn't been easy, but after the few months I'd had I needed to escape. I can't say it's how I'd planned my year to turn out, but as the sun cast wide rays of light onto the broad hills, and dipped in and out from behind the gliding clouds, I wasn't complaining.

I felt her heave into the deserted station and grind to a halt, letting out a tremendous sigh as passengers around me wearily reached for their bags and scrambled off the train. I gathered all I owned and stepped out into the bright night. The mottled moon illuminated the platform, grazing the earth with its touch, but lighting my path as I followed the other passengers out of the station. My eyelids fell as I inhaled the crisp, salty night air, and I smiled at the coolness in the back of my throat that reminded me I was home.

The early morning rays slip through the curtains, echoing around my beach house like a radio hit, as my eyes are met with the perfect ocean view. I pick around my belongings, which remain scattered across the tired oak floor where I'd dumped them the night before, after my short walk from the station. Escaping onto the balcony, I reach for the pastel colours in the sky, allowing the sea breeze to intoxicate me with a feeling of freedom. She whispers the ocean's secrets in my ears and pulls at the loose strands of my hair, beckoning me to the tinted, shimmering mass that stretched far before me.

Back in the beach house, I rummaged through my bags for my costume. The familiar fabric hugged me tightly, as I briefly scanned the horizon before stepping out, replacing the security of my hut for the vast, sandy beach. I jogged down to the shore line with damp grains clinging to my feet, my hair outstretched far behind me, riding the breeze as if it were a boat on the ocean. The rippling waters lap lazily at the sand as I splash through the shallows. Once waist deep, I submerged myself. The icy ocean overwhelmed all my senses, making me forget that the past two months had been a living hell. I study the endless calm before me, highlighted edges of waves rolling delicately into shore, warmed by the early morning sun.

After sometime, I return my gaze back to the beach to see a hazy figure ambling across the sand, following a four-legged, bouncing bundle of energy. I leave the twinkling water behind and stroll back towards the beach house, observing the approaching shadows out the corner of my eye. Out of nowhere, the excitable puppy bounded into me, forcing me to take a step back as a wide grin formed on my face. I crouch down to the energetic spaniel rolling at my feet, tail wagging rapidly.

The warmth on my back disappears, and I look up to the sky to be met with a pair of vivid sage eyes. I rise from the sandy carpet of the earth and study the mysterious walker. His lean physique, visible through his thin cotton shirt, is familiar and the falling curls of chocolate hair shade the eyes that bring back so many memories. Then he spoke. In that same soothing voice that sounds like waves breaking on the sand. "Long time no see".