



New Home



Jon Rogers stood looking out of the wide picture window. His fists, dug deeply into his pockets, were clenched tightly. Anger was boiling in his heart when Tara came up beside him. He flashed her a sullen look and turned his attention back to the restless, heaving ocean.

“Don’t take it out on me, Jon,” she chided gently. “Coming to the east coast to live wasn’t my idea. But honest, it’s not so bad here.”

Jon was depressed all the way through to his bones. With a dark sigh he exploded, “I hate it here! Good grief, what are we supposed to do anyway? I can’t use my roller blades or my skate board or anything!” he

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shook his head sorrowfully. “The worst part is that I’ll never see my friends again.”

It was a rotten deal, that’s what. The noise of the screaming gulls and the crashing waves were enough to drive a guy crazy. Jon sighed dismally. He would never get used to it here. Never.

“We can always put up a net and play badminton or volleyball,” Tara pointed out, trying to look on the bright side.

Jon snorted and did not reply. He was half a head taller than five-foot-two Tara, even though Tara was a year older. His hair was jet black like his mother’s and was determined to hang over the right side of his forehead. Although Jon was tall and well-built, he still resented his lack of good eyesight. His brown eyes were always shadowed by his aviator-style glasses, which were a constant nuisance. However, if he didn’t want to see the world as one huge blur, then glasses were necessary until he could get contacts next year. He fumbled around his room like a blind man each morning until he located his glasses.

Tara, on the other hand, had blonde hair that hung nearly to her waist. Her eyes were a dark smoky grey. Jon said she had the sad-looking eyes of a hound dog. Her olive skin came from her Italian mother, and she had a hunch that Jon was envious of her easy tan. Deep dimples dived in and out of her cheeks when she talked or smiled. Her parents had been killed a year before and it was just lately that her dimples had begun

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to appear once more. The death of her parents was also the reason she had come to live with the Rogers.

That was precisely what proved to be such a source of embarrassment to Jonathon. For Tara wasn't his sister at all; she was his aunt! For pity's sake, people weren't supposed to have babies when they were middle-aged! But Tara had come along all the same, and just one year before Jon was born. Now she called Jon's parents Fred and Maxine. It was sickening, that's what it was, even if Jon's dad was Tara's brother. Boy, just try explaining that to his friends!

"Look out there," Jon growled bitterly. "The waves are too high to swim and we don't even have a surfboard. If those waves get any higher they'll swallow the house."

"Honestly, Jon, the people who built this house planned for high waves," Tara soothed. "Come on, what we both need is to find something to do."

Jon gave her a mock bow. "All right, Wise One, exactly what do you have in mind?"

"Well..." Here pretty face screwed up in a frown. "Why don't we take a look in that old sandstone tower down the beach?"

"Big deal!" Jon snapped. "What is there to see? Boy, Tara, you don't even have a clue."

"But maybe we could go inside and find our way up to the widow's walk. We'd be able to see a long, long way from there."

"Why? To see more water and more sand? No, thanks."



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“Jon,” Tara said earnestly, her dark eyes gloomy, “do you think all this is easy for me? At least you have your parents. So will you please try to be a little more agreeable?”

Jon clenched his jaw. “I didn’t have any problems when I lived in Colorado. There were all sorts of things to do there.”

“You didn’t even hear me,” Tara sighed reproachfully. “You still have your parents. Can’t you at least be thankful for that?”

His brown eyes narrowed. “You mean I have my mum,” he muttered stubbornly. “Look, Tara, if you want to go to explore some stupid old tower, be my guest. I want to be by myself anyhow.”

“Why?” she demanded softly. “So you can go on feeling sorry for yourself?”

Jon didn’t answer. He just kept staring at the ocean as though it was partly responsible for bringing him to this awful place.

“Tara! Jonathon!” called a voice from another part of the house. “You can begin putting away your things in a little while.”

Tara turned away in defeat and sang out merrily, “Okay, Maxine! I’m going down to the beach to take a look at that old house and I’ll be right back.”

That old house sat far back from the rolling waves, a great gloomy-looking place with three storeys and a sandstone tower attached to its left side. The tower had been added for the owner’s wife, Evangeline Hawkins, a hundred years before. A narrow spiral staircase led to



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an upper room where she had spent her days painting seascapes. In the tiny room below she had made her afternoon tea and rested before returning to her work. At the very top of the tower was the widow's walk where she would go to watch for the ship that would return her husband from his many sea voyages.

Before leaving the house, Tara poked her head around the corner for one last plea. "Are you sure you don't want to come with me? It'll be a lot better than moping around the house all day, and we might find something exciting."

Jon merely shook his head, never taking his eyes from the rolling surf.

Tara sailed out of the door and felt the cold salty air strike her face. "Goodness," she murmured balefully, "I'm not thrilled about moving here either. I guess I'm just thankful for a place to live. Anyway, getting all angry and bitter doesn't help anything. Maybe it'll be nice living by the ocean."

She kept just beyond the reach of the waves as she walked towards the massive old house. Stopping, she studied the sandstone tower thoughtfully. It loomed, mysterious and lofty beside the house and she wondered where the sea captain had ever discovered the red sandstone.

"How eerie it must look when the fog rolls in," she mused. "I'll have to try and see it if there's fog tonight."

The only other house on the cove was a quarter of a mile farther on. It was perched on a rocky headland



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beside a big blue lighthouse, but she had no idea yet who lived there.

“The tower has windows in it,” she told herself. “But I guess an artist would need lots of light to work by.” She shielded her face against stinging particles of sand blown by the wind and stepped to the door of the tower. Scraping away the drifted sand with her foot, she tested the door to see if it was unlocked. It was. She tugged at the door, but it only groaned in protest. Scooping away some more sand, she tried again. Now it opened wide enough to let a blast of mouldy-smelling, age-old air rush out to greet her.

“Well,” she beamed triumphantly and stepped inside the tower. It felt chilly and dank, and she did wish Jon had come with her. Not, she quickly assured herself, that she was afraid. But it did feel a little ominous.

At any rate, she was standing on a cement floor with a ragged, stained carpet. The room, of course, was circular. It held a sagging, tattered sofa, a chair with one leg missing, and a small round cast-iron stove that had been used to heat water and to warm the area.

“Not bad,” she whispered, shrugging. “Really, not bad at all. So why hasn’t someone snatched up the place and restored it?”

Gingerly she crept around the room. Stopping at the bottom of the spiral staircase, she looked upwards. The stairs certainly appeared sturdy enough, but did she really want to go up there all alone?

She was still pondering the mystery of the whole thing when she heard a sound. Chill bumps raced over



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her body and she stood very still. She was ready to flee if it became necessary. Cocking her head, she listened intently.

After a short time the sound was repeated. Or maybe it was a different noise this time, it was hard to tell. She only knew that her heart was hammering wildly and that her body felt like it was plugged into an electrical outlet.

Persuading herself to move, she backed to the open door a few inches at a time. Reaching it, she spun outside, slammed the door behind her and raced away. She didn't stop running until she reached her home and was safely inside.

"Bogeyman after you?" Jon asked dryly.

"Oh Jon!" she yelped helplessly. "There's someone in that old tower!"

