

## A Person Unknown

The rising sun overlooking the hinterland of Cosy Cove blushed a hot magenta as Ana Jaxon, eyes skyward, hurriedly burst through her back veranda gate. The curious 12-year old with wild crimson hair, vibrant emerald eyes and a spattering of freckles craved the cool refreshing embrace of the bay. Ana had a passion for diving ever since she could remember, drawn to the luminescent glow of the world beneath the shimmering surface.

As Ana kickstarted the engine choke into life, the ageing yet sturdy steel boat with fading paint, begun to head north with the nearby rising sun continuing to melt and immerse itself amongst the hiding treetops. Flickers of gold, red and orange paint seemed to splash on a blank canvas, as the glow from the burgeoning day grew. Once she was in deep water, Ana cut the engine, pulled up her half-worn wetsuit and dived gracefully into the water.

Ana's connection to the waterways surrounding the Cove was innate. Her mother often recounted Ana had swum before she was born; a bond only a mother could understand. Ana's father had disappeared suddenly with no reason known when she was six years old. An increasingly fading memory Ana had of him was when he had gifted her a rusted locket pendant with a small photo of them; an image of them with their wet slicked back hair, grinning on the lime green boat.

Within Ana's world below, a cloud of bubbles swirled around her clinging to her skin like pearls. The familiar yet always spine tickling feeling of the water made her skin tingle. Ana cleared her snorkel – pffft! Rolling over, a translucent underwater world appeared. Huge schools of nervous fish hung behind dancing seaweed, whilst vibrant starfish glimmered in hues of apricot, pink and lemon. Rainbow coral trembled in the strong current.

Whilst anticipating it was soon time to return to the world above, Ana sensed an intimidating presence approaching. Twirling around instinctively, a myriad of flesh and tentacles came into focus with a glistening oversized eye bearing down on her. Suddenly

the creature's net of tentacles sprung forth, engulfing her. Ana screamed within her snorkel as she struggled free. Salty water escaped the ocean and ran through her mouth piece. Splutter! She grasped her locket within her crinkling hand and curled up as small as possible, attempting to elude the creature's grasp. With her heart racing and breath dwindling, Ana's consciousness faded, unbeknown to the creature's eventual retreat.

The whispering of tall trees was the first sensation Ana heard as she stirred, strewn upon the shoreline. Ana's sunken eyes flickered open slowly as she sensed an unknown presence. A figure loomed above her. Familiar yet unknown. Slowly it dawned on Ana. The emerald eyes. The wild crimson hair. Curiously Ana glanced at her locket slung around her chest and then back to the familiar memory. Father