

Where the Heart Rests

by Isadora Finch

Clara stepped off the bus, the sea air rushing to greet her. The village looked smaller than she'd imagined—a scattering of cottages along the cliffs, their chimneys trailing thin ribbons of smoke.

She tightened her scarf and started toward the inn. It wasn't home, but it was a start.

The cottage sat at the edge of the water, its windows glowing with warmth. The woman at the desk handed her a key and a kind smile.

"You're here to stay long?"

Clara hesitated. "I'm not sure yet."

The woman nodded knowingly. "People come here to find things—or to let them go. Either way, it takes time."

That night, Clara unpacked slowly, running her fingers over the few things she'd brought. A photo slipped from the pile—a picture of her and Tom, taken on their last trip together. She pressed it against her chest before tucking it away in a drawer.

The next morning, Clara wandered down to the harbor. The tide was out, leaving boats resting in the mud. She spotted him then—a man standing at the end of the pier, a sketchbook in hand.

She didn't mean to stare, but he caught her.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" he said, gesturing toward the horizon.

Clara nodded. "It's peaceful."

"I'm James."

"Clara."

The conversation didn't last long, but it lingered with her throughout the day.

Over the next few weeks, they met often—at the market, along the shore, in the tiny café where he sometimes sketched. Clara learned he'd come here to escape something, though he never said what.

One evening, as the sun dipped below the waves, James handed her a drawing.

"It's you," he said softly.

Clara looked at it—the lines delicate, capturing the quiet sadness in her eyes.

“You see too much,” she whispered.

“I see enough.”

The space between them felt smaller now, less guarded. But fear still lingered in Clara’s chest. She wasn’t ready—not yet.

The sea called to her that night, its rhythm steady, constant.

Clara stood at the water’s edge, her heart beating to its rhythm.

Maybe love wasn’t about holding on.

Maybe it was about learning to let go—and trusting someone to catch you when you fall.