

## **The Cape House**

There's a house that holds my fondest memories. They are sealed and locked tight in the confines of its glass walls. The collection started off scarce, but has grown grandiose, sometimes reluctantly, over the years. Within the glass house hides my subconscious, the moments I've glorified, and the ones I've tried hard to forget. They are each marked with a single item, a secret identity I've branded them with that only I know. It is here that they remain, until I am able to return and revisit them.

It takes an hour and fifteen minutes to get to the memories, but often feels like forever due to anticipation and bridge traffic. In most cases, even caffeine fails to get my jitters to subside. Whenever I am en route to my safe haven, it is hard to hold back the dance my feet make along the dashboard of the front seat of the car.

As I approach the bridge, on a road that limits the speed to 15 miles per hour, my anticipation builds. Driving eastbound, I head toward my serene escape, a place where nothing can touch me if I do not allow it. As I approach the Bourne Bridge, a sudden sense of calmness overtakes my body. My happy feet stop. The passengers in the car, in unison, turn silent, although I am never positive if this is reality or an act of my imagination. It is in this moment that my mind drifts. I have lifted the latch to my memory box, and in perfect accordance, a slideshow of moments is unearthed.

As the car exits the bridge and rounds the rotary, a routine sigh of relief escapes me. Home at last. A few winding roads lead me to my favorite street. This street leads me to The Cape House. The air smells of salt and the wind warrants a bad hair day, but to me, this is home. The once one-story house is now a beautiful three-story home, built to accommodate chaos and friends in mass amounts. I remember coming here with my best friend back when we had training wheels on our bikes. We would sit in the unfinished basement, drinking vanilla cokes and watching our favorite movies, laughing for hours on end, content to be by the beach in good company. We grew taller, and the house grew with us, molding to fit our ever growing lives together.

The cobblestone driveway leads up to double glass doors with seashells along the border of the frame. My bags always end up in the car for hours as I rediscover the magic of The Cape House. As I turn the knob to the front door, I am reminded of the house's power again, as if for the first time. I am immediately encompassed with the smell of sea salt and fresh laundry. The inside is big and open, with sunlight pouring in from every direction and crevice. I breathe in more. I walk toward the open living room and plop onto the navy blue couch. Cloud-like. As I sink into the cushions, I gaze into the horizon that is staring me in the face. For the hundredth time, I smile at the placement of the couch, which faces the ocean instead of the TV screen. This view is the best I have ever seen. I slide the handle of the back door, let myself onto the deck and breathe in the air in silence. I have carefully executed this exact process before, but each time it feels brand new. Nothing can be heard but the sound of seagulls calling to each other and waves thrashing, breaking violently as they hit the shoreline.

Not a soul is on the beach. The waves are lurching, yet calm, almost begging me to take a dip. I have to get closer.

I am all too familiar with this sensation. The ocean has been known to call to me in times when my mind is hazy and my judgment clouded. It was late March the first time the water got the best of me. I was fifteen and confined by rules: Curfew, dietary restrictions, and guidelines to follow. Late one night after a few too many vodka cranberries, the ocean tempted me with its magic. *I had to go in.*

"It's too cold," the others said.

"You're drunk," they reminded, as if I needed a reminder with my head spinning in every which direction.

But it didn't matter. I waited a few minutes until the idea had been erased from everyone's minds. I grabbed the boy's hand, a troubled soul with badass tendencies, and we headed for the beach.

"What are we doing?" he asked.

Without an answer, I guided him down the dark deck steps, having memorized the path with my eyes closed. We didn't stop until our toes reached the water's freezing edge. I felt him shiver. In one fluid motion, our clothes were

scattered along the beach, and we were grasping each other for warmth in the middle of the ocean. After our moment of insanity came and went, we carelessly gathered our clothes and made our way back to the house, shivering and soaked to the bone, trying to keep our distance from the others' questioning looks until we had a chance to dry off.

The dog nuzzles my hand, bringing me back to reality. He always finds me out here. He's as excited as I am. I pat his head as he takes a seat next to me, tail wagging. He is an overweight lab who typically has a loud and boisterous bark, but even he knows not to ruin the moment with noise. We look at each other with the same thought in mind. It's good to be home.

The dog and I travel along the shoreline together. We walk for miles and I let my feet sink into the sand. This is heaven, I think to myself. The dog finds a large stick from a leftover bonfire. He's in doggy heaven, I am sure of it. The water is cold for May, but my body seems numb to its frigidness. It's been too long since I've seen the water to care about the temperature.

I look back to the house made mostly of glass. It seems so big and intimidating from the shore. But from inside, it is the calmest place I have ever known. The dog and I make our way back inside as a storm brews among the clouds. There is no better place to watch a storm than inside this house. We make a fire and a bowl of popcorn and we let nature run its course. We think about the boy, the beach, and ourselves. Within minutes, all light from the sky has faded and wrath is taken out on the ocean. Waves thrash through and through as strikes of lightening beam down under blooming thunder. But we are safe. We assure ourselves again that no one and nothing can touch us if we don't let it.

My memory wanders again. I am reminded of my seventeenth birthday, Memorial Day weekend. A late night turned into an early morning as the boy and I stood in the kitchen, waiting for a moment to decide our fate. A moment, until it happened, that I thought would define me for the rest of my life. He leaned over and kissed me just as the sun was starting to rise. I could taste Marlboro Lights and Heinekens on his breath as his lips met mine. A laundry list of negatives told me how

wrong we were for each other, but in a desperate attempt to feel something, I gave him what was supposed to be my most cherished gift: my virginity.

Each time I sit on the barstools at the kitchen counter, I am reminded of this moment. He is permanently engraved in The Cape House, as are the tears the hardwood floors absorbed the weekend my brother's best friend chose to take his own life. The echoing laughter from countless childhood stories are stored in the walls, and the endless family fights are visible on the side of the house, where, against my mother's will, I would repeatedly thrash a field hockey ball with my stick in an attempt to release my anger.

This house is made of glass, yet it is strong. It is full of promises, memories, and surprises. This house will endure the biggest storm, knowing that it may just as quickly turn into the brightest day full of illuminating sunlight. This house is me. It has molded me. It has allowed me to become who I am. When I first started coming here, there was nothing more than a foundation. I have watched it be built from the ground up, enduring renovation after renovation, storm after storm. Now, it stands solid, complete, much like myself.