

Two Love Stories

By K. E. Ward

Stronger than the Ocean Tide

Haley had been twenty-two years old. She was blessed with thick, auburn hair, which fell to her shoulders. Her brown eyes were clever, and she had a charming, dimpled smile. Her nose was cute and round, her face heart-shaped. Growing up, she was the darling of her class. As she grew older, her heart-shaped face lengthened a tad bit, and her neck grew longer and more elegant.

I loved Haley because she was soft-spoken and her words were gentle. I loved her because I considered her brave and assertive, despite her quietness. She was physically attractive, and her personality became outgoing and even flirtatious. She began her life as a shy little girl, but demanded to increase her strength with assertion.

My name is Andrew, and I missed Haley. She died so unexpectedly. What I remember is being called the day after she had gone to the hospital and the sound of her mother's grieving voice telling me she was sorry. But she was Haley's own mother. I should have been the one to tell *her* I was sorry.

It had been a driving accident. An inebriated driver had swerved into incoming traffic going northbound. There was nothing the doctors could do.

I suppose her mother thought I was someone very important to Haley, because she invited me over to look through her things after a few days. I took one gift home with me, a remembrance and a message for me and my future.

The objects were obviously intended for me; after all, they were wrapped in a box with a tag on it and my name. They were supposed to be a birthday present for me for next month, which was in May. I opened the gift, her mother there, and inside the box we found a brown, leather journal with a fountain pen and stationery. It was her telling me to make a record of my life and share it with others. Through the written word I would fulfill her wishes for me, because I loved her and I wanted to honor them.

So, I started that evening. I wrote a journal entry and my first letter, which was to my brother in Alaska. I expected to complete the journal and stay in touch with everyone else I loved. To Robert I wrote:

"Hi, Brother, I suppose I should fill you in on everything that's been happening since we last talked. I miss you. I have so much to tell you. Will you promise to keep in touch with me, also?" I continued writing the letter, silently telling Haley, "I love you." And that was what I would always do. "Thank you, Haley," and I cried.

I thought about Haley all the time, especially while using the journal and writing letters. I started writing letters to many of my family members and all of my friends. I shared my day-to-day activities and inner emotions with them. My letters were not just about Haley. I also talked about my life dreams and goals. I tried to establish close relationships with my family and friends. I could have kept up with them through social media alone, but I also wanted to give them something more genuine and tailored to them individually, and I too wanted something physical to hold, like letters and gifts.

I continued a pen pal relationship with my distant aunt for a long time, maybe three years. She was over in the state of Maine.

One day she decided to run a blood sample through a genealogy test and find out our ancestry. It turned out we were largely Hungarian, English, Scotch-Irish, French, and Dutch. She tried contacting various distant family members and telling them how they were related.

One of Haley's cousins, Brian, and his family decided to do the same thing. Brian talked to a young man in Maryland, who

lived just outside of Baltimore, who knew all about their family history, as he was born in Sweden.

One day Brian told me to get on a long-distance call to Sweden. So, I got on the phone with a nice family who knew how to speak English, and that was very good, because I did not know how to speak any of their language. It was a three-way call. Brian said to them, "Good to talk with you. Are you having a good day?"

"Ja, yes, we are having a very good evening here in Sweden."

And it was then that I heard her voice in the background. *Haley?* I thought.

It had to be her. I could recognize that voice, soft and yet a little hoarse, answering a question an older woman had asked her in Swedish. But what was she doing there? I thought she had died.

It turned out that she had in fact not died years earlier. That was what they told me. Her family thought that I would not be as crushed if I thought she had died than what had really happened: Haley became depressed and didn't want any of her friends or boyfriend to see her anymore. But I had found her. I had looked around the world, doing genealogy and family history,

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