

THE CHANGING TIDES

"Stop!" 14-year-old Mira exclaimed as Jeremy raced down the jagged stairs to the beach with his enormous surfboard, "You're going to hurt yourself." Not paying attention to his surroundings, Jeremy missed a step and fell onto the concrete. "I told you not to run," Mira lectured. It was Jeremy's 12th birthday, and their mom had a work emergency, so Mira had to take care of Jeremy, and she was less than thrilled.

"I'm fine," Jeremy countered as she helped him up. He was annoyed that he was spending his birthday with Mira. Their dad had taught them everything about surfing before passing away a few years back. Since then, the family had grown more distant, and Jeremy and Mira had drifted apart. They did not speak much, always fought, and had a general disdain for each other. Jeremy hated that Mira lectured him and Mira hated how Jeremy never listened to her. Mira seemed more interested in being on her phone and gaining followers on Instagram. Jeremy acted like a little kid, not caring about anyone else but himself. Mira and Jeremy were like oil and water.

Looking at the vast turquoise ocean, they could taste the sea salt breeze on the tips of their tongues. The ocean smelled of seaweed and fish, just like sushi, their favorite food. They could hear the thunderous waves crashing onto the shore.

As Jeremy laid out his towel, he noticed something shiny poking out from under the sand. Digging, he uncovered a small, shiny box with a gold-brimmed silver locket. When he opened it, he found a small piece of paper crumpled up. He showed the paper to Mira who instantly rolled her eyes at him. However, curiosity got the best of them, so they opened the paper. *There is only one thing that represents your past, present, and future. What am I?*

Suddenly, Jeremy and Mira felt the waves of the beach enclosing around them, and they opened their eyes to a hospital bed. In front of them stood three-year-old mini-Mira, with rounded cheeks and wide hazel eyes. On the wall hung a calendar that read August 17, 2011, Jeremy's birthdate. Mira asked to hold Jeremy's little body in her arms. As she cradled him, she felt his cute, tiny toes, and his minuscule fingers wrapped around her pinkie. She smelled his fresh, powdery scent and felt an enormous amount of love overtaking her heart. Jeremy looked up at Mira, sensing comfort and warmth. He heard her giggly laugh as she planted a big, slobbery kiss on his nose. Love filled their eyes as they looked at

each other for the first time. An unparalleled bond forming that would last forever. The walls shrunk around them, and they were back in the present day.

Jeremy and Mira looked at each other dazed and confused. For a moment, they felt that same irreplaceable bond, happiness, and affection flooding their brains. Instantly though, they were back to arguing. Mira yelled, "Jeremy why did you dig up the locket without checking with me first?"

Jeremy exclaimed back, "You touched it too! This isn't my fault, stop blaming me for everything!"

They carefully examined the locket again and another piece of paper fell out. Mira said, "We don't have time for this." Jeremy ignored her and quickly held the paper up for both to read. *If it plays together, it stays together. What am I?*

Jeremy and Mira felt a strong gust of wind swirling around them and stood facing a locked door. "What does the clue say over there?" Mira asked as they frantically scrambled to solve the last puzzle in the escape room's final minute.

"It says to go to the highest point within this room," Jeremy responded. Time was ticking down and they had to work together to escape.

"Wait a minute," Mira suddenly realized, "Come on, follow me!" They sprinted as fast as they could to the lighthouse and scaled it. With a few seconds left, Mira pulled a secret lever and a door opened. Mira dove in and at the last second pulled Jeremy in before it shut.

"Yes! We did it!" Jeremy exclaimed as they hugged. They were only able to complete the escape room because of their trust and loyalty to each other. Feeling that nobody could ruin their bond, they teleported back to the beach, still hugging. Jeremy and Mira still felt that connection in their heart, as they let go of each other, and looked at the locket.

"Did you feel that?" Mira questioned.

"Yes, that was weird," Jeremy said, "Want to open the next clue together?"

"Sure," Mira responded as they unfolded another paper. *It is the only thing that will stay with you for a lifetime. What am I?* The sand below them disappeared, and they fell through the floor.

"Time to go to bed!" Mira and Jeremy yelled as the children watched Cocomelon for the 100th time. Immediately, a fight broke out among the cousins over which episode they would watch the next day. Jeremy and Mira looked at each other and laughed. Mira's family lived in Chicago, and Jeremy's family lived in Maine, so they visited each summer. Both families enjoyed spending those long, lazy days at the lake and playing in the park. Because of Jeremy's and Mira's close connection, their kids had maintained one too. The adventures that Jeremy and Mira had over the years had strengthened their bond and their children's bond. "I'm really glad that the kids get along," Jeremy said.

"Me too," Mira stated with the same extraordinary bond tugging in her heart. Once again, the floor disappeared, and they fell.

Back at the beach, Mira and Jeremy stood frozen. The riddles, the adventures, it finally all made sense. "What am I? A sibling!!" They both exclaimed simultaneously. They had seen their past, present, and future and their special connection. What they both had was truly special, an unbreakable bond between a sister and brother.

"Let's go home and play a board game," Mira exclaimed as she picked up both surfboards and started to walk up the stairs.

"Wait!" Jeremy exclaimed, "Can I hold your hand?"

"Of course," Mira said as she smiled. Together, they left the beach, the locket buried in the sand, for another brother and sister to discover.