

Green Glass Memories

The sun soaked through her cotton cover-up as Jackie strolled down the beach, breathing in the salty air. The tension ebbed from her body. Day two of her long-awaited vacation, and her only plan was to relax, take a short swim, and watch her daughter, Shelby, being part fish, swim in the shallows. With a life-guard on duty, she could lower her watchfulness, but never altogether. A mother never did.

“Mommy, Mommy, watch this,” Shelby called for the fiftieth time as she plunged underwater, then sent her feet skyward in a perfect handstand.

“Good job, honey,” she called over the surf, tucking a stray lock of brunette hair behind her ear. She edged her way down shore, planning to turn back at the large outcropping of rocks, when she heard splashing.

“Mommy! Wait for me!”

Shelby sprinted to her side.

“What’s up, Lovebug?” She pulled her daughter’s wet shoulder against her in a sideways hug.

“Where’re you going?”

“To the rocks and back.”

“Race you!” she yelled and bolted, running as fast as little kid legs could go, all knees and heels flying.

“More energy than God.” Jackie shook her head. She preferred a calmer approach to life.

“I beat you! I beat you!” the girl jumped up and down, then clambered onto the rough rocks and disappeared over the side.

“Sure did—hey, be careful! Those rocks are sharp.”

Quicken her step, she arrived to find Shelby clutching something green.

“Look, a genie bottle.” Shelby said, holding up a corked, sea-weathered wine bottle that rattled when shaken. “Something’s inside. Can we open it?”

“Let’s see.”

After several attempts, Jackie sighed. “We need a corkscrew.”

“Let’s go now! I wanna see what’s in there.”

“Yes, let’s.”

Her daughter ran ahead, gripping the bottle’s neck.

“Don’t drop it,” she yelled to deaf ears.

At the condo, they perched together on tall stools and eased out the cork. Inside was a tightly rolled note and several beads.

Jackie unrolled the paper with care and read.

“ ‘To Whoever finds this Bottle. Enclosed are seven beads made specially with the ash of my dearly departed husband, Magnus Andersen. He loved traveling. At his unexpected passing, we created beads from his ashes, seven for the seven seas. We hoped he would to continue his journey beyond life. Thank you for honoring his trip. Sincerely, Ella Andersen, Bergan, Vestland Norway.’ ”

She stopped reading.

Her daughter pointed. “Look! The ink changes from black to blue.”

Jackie read onward. “The blue says, ‘Magnus visited us in Kulusuk, Greenland. We had a beer and sent him on his way. The Fleischer Family.’ ”

“Look, it’s green here.” Shelby pointed.

“It is. ‘Dear finder, we had the honor of Magnus’s visit while vacationing in Spain. He appeared on our beach in A Coruna in Spain. We toured the Tower of Hercules, then bid him a fond farewell. As the locals say, Buen viaje. The Parker family (from Reno, Nevada USA) visiting Europe.’ ”

The remaining page was blank.

“Is Spain far away, Mom?”

“Very!” Jackie rolled a bead in her hand.

“It’s so pretty. Can we keep one?”

Jackie smiled. “What do you think?”

Shelby looked at the bottle, then traced her finger down the page.

“I think we should put them back.”

Jackie smiled. “Me, too.”

Shelby rummaged in her backpack and pulled out a purple glitter-pen.

“How about, ‘Dear Finder. Magnus had a lovely time on our beach. We wish him safe travels.

Jackie and Shelby Reed. Jupiter, Florida,’” Jackie offered.

“Perfect!” Shelby said.

The next day they boarded the dolphin viewing boat, the bottle safely nestled in Shelby’s backpack. Jackie wasn’t sure what the regulations stated but didn’t want to be accused of littering.

When the crowd surged to one rail at a dolphin sighting, mother and daughter eased to the quieter side. They pulled the bottle from the back pack, glanced around, then slipped it over the side. The waves seemed to devour the green bottle.

“What’re you doing?” one of the boatmen asked, eyeing them from the prow.

“Nothing. It was crowded, so we came over here to see if the dolphins might come to this side to play.” She tucked her errant hair strand behind her ears.

He furrowed his brow, then shrugged and returned to his duties.

“Close one,” Jackie whispered.

Shelby gave a conspiratorial giggle and put a small finger against her lips. Then she leaned over the railing, waving. “Have a safe trip, Mr. Magnus.”