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Ten Years

Every summer, I sit on the shore and watch the waves and the gulls and I dream. I love this place, and I know every tuft of seagrass that grows up among the smooth stones. Year after year, I have written my name in the sand over and over, my handwriting changing from print to cursive and back again as I spell out my questions and wishes so the world can read them - at least until they are erased by the wind and the incoming tide. Once I traced words so deep into the sand that I could still read the faint markings left the next morning.

But right now, I am thinking of ambition, and Where I Want to be in Ten Years, which is the question my teacher asked me - asked everyone - before school let out for the summer.

“Where do you want to be in ten years?”

The girl sitting next to me had shrugged and answered, “Married to some rich guy.”

Really? I wanted to ask. Is that all you want out of life? All that can and will make you happy?

“Where do you want to be in ten years?”

“I don’t know,” I told the teacher.

The cry of the gulls overhead echo around me. Where do you want to be in ten years? Why not here, at home with the sea and the sky?

Twilight settles in as a whisp of a moon appears in the sky, and I still sit thinking, surrounded by questions and uncertainty. What is my ambition? Where do I want to be? Here? This place almost belongs to me, or at least I belong to it. But somehow, I want more than contentment. I want happiness, which you can only have if you really live. And to live, you have to experience every bit of life: love and sorrow, beauty and heartbreak. You have to find it for yourself.

Because home isn’t home anymore if it’s not a place you can come home to.