



PAGES OF LOVE AND HATE

Carol Bryant

Pages of *Love* and *Hate*

Maggie left the apartment before dawn; she wanted to watch the sun come up over the ocean. There was a light mist in the air. The weather channel was predicting rain and possible storms, but this was her last day, and she needed to think and clear her head. As she walked the shore to her favorite spot, she picked up a piece of driftwood that had been washed up overnight. It had been bleached by the sun and caressed by the ocean. Its surface was smooth to touch, and the ridges had swirls. She ran her fingers over it so that she can memorize its every aspect as she can't take it with her. As she walked, she whispered into the breeze, and her eyelids fluttered as she breathed in the salty aroma of the sea. She saw white flashes out in the ocean; she stopped and scrunched her toes into the soft, damp sand.

Maggie sat in silence and watched as the fireball slowly emerged, rising on the horizon. It was magnificent; it was as though it were coming straight out of the ocean. The burst of sunlight turned the sky a soft pink, and the clouds became ablaze with the color. The waves tumbled as they struggled with the sea and crashed on the shore. They were the echo of her heart and soul and the tension seemed to melt

from her body.

The light rain began to patter on the ocean, and the breeze was picking up; it was like music bouncing from within the ocean. The waves dancing as they rose and fell, they were like great mountains forever changing. And the unforgiving waves were angry, dark, and unyielding. The wind pushed against the waves, gathering in strength, only to crash one by one and never to rise again.

The breeze blew through Maggie's shirt; she bowed her head and closed her eyes from the salty sting of the waves and the rain. As she sat there, she let her tears fall. She cried for her parents, her children; but mostly, she cried for all her memories, which were nothing but pain and lies. The dampness from the wet sand already made its way through her jeans as she hugged her knees. Her hair was loose, tousled, and tangled from the light rain and the breeze, but Maggie didn't care. As time elapsed, she sat there amongst the waves and the ocean reflecting on her life. The water was warm as it crashed against the golden sand and the sun, trying so elegantly to shine in the pale sky as the gray clouds slowly cascaded across it.

A sense of nostalgia coursed through her body; it was as if she had been here forever and nothing was to be heard and no sign of hope in sight. She had flown to Naples, Florida, two weeks ago, the day after David left for one of his meetings. She needed time to think and try to come to terms with what she was about to do. She knew it was not going to be easy, but nothing had been easy in the last year.

The water was choppy, and she watched the waves as they rolled with foamy white tips, spreading themselves like the lace of a veil. They crashed with such soft sound that they were not noisy yet, but the sound was more like music of long ago. It was a beautiful sight sitting here at sunrise; there was no better place she would rather be, even in the rain. The beach was so silent. There were few birds this

morning, and there were no people; the only sound was from the waves. There is a cool breeze, stealing the warmth from the sun, giving me taste and smell. The ocean music takes command of my mind and ears with the crashing waves and cries of the gulls.

She took another look at the beach and looked out to the ocean, with the raindrops becoming a part of it. She can hear each watery gift; they were softer than the patter of tiny feet. The waves moved according to the wind, and she tried to commit it to her memory because it would probably be her last visit here. “Oh, how I wish I could bottle it so I could smell it and have the sound with me forever. The rain is almost silent as it touches the sand, and I think that this is how music began with its natural rhythm.”

She sat there as if in leisure, forgetting everything—the time and the rain. When the clouds overcame the sunlight, she stood; and wiping her face, she made her way back down the beach. The water is rough, rougher than usual. The thick salty air consuming my breathing until it hurts. But she felt nothing but sadness as she turned and stared down the empty and lonely shore, longing for something different. Maggie had chosen the beach for her place of mourning; she needed the loud and powerful crashes to deafen her bruised and bleeding thoughts. I used to scream at the ocean but not now, now I stand in silence. She stood there watching a gateway of water worlds where the shore lay jagged and broken the outcrop just a torn piece of paper. The sea rushed forward to steal the last note of music. She had not been paying attention to the rain; she was so lost in her thoughts and memories.

The clouds that had been gathering since morning, dark and unyielding. The wind pushed against the waves not playful, but with gathering strength. The air was thick and the storm promising nothing but hardship for everyone.

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As she walks, she can hear the seagulls crying overhead; and as she closed her eyes, she can hear her mother's voice telling her that everything would be okay and not to worry. She can feel her mother's hand take hers, telling her it was time to go. As she was walking back, rain began to patter from a dark sky, and fire rose to meet them. It looked like smoke whirling around the waves and she knew dead things were being washed upon the damp sand. Lightning flashed across the sky, and then a large boom of thunder came; it looked as if it were coming straight out of the ocean.

Maggie began to jog to her car; she should have left a long time ago. The wind rose and a white storm covered the land and one by one the waves crashed but never rose again. She barely made it to the car before the downpour came; it only lasted about fifteen minutes. It had stopped by the time she got to the apartment, but she knew it would start again any minute. She was loading the car when lightning struck across the sky, followed by thunder; and by the time she was finished, it was raining again.

It had been raining off and on all day ever since she came home from the beach, and the dark clouds were building in the northern skies. It was getting dark outside now, and the rain was drumming on the roof and windows. It was much louder than Maggie would have thought possible, but her nerves could account for that. She had been nervous all day, and trying to hide it from the girls when she talked to them was almost impossible to do. How she managed that, she didn't know, but they were occupied with planning a birthday party, so maybe that explained it. They wanted to make sure she would be home for Sandra's second birthday party on Sunday. Maggie told them she would be leaving the next day and would call as soon as she got home. As she was hanging up, she told them she loved.

They had been predicting storms all afternoon, and from the