

THE LIGHTHOUSE

written by

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INT. DENISE'S PAINTING STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Bright, windows all around, camera flashes on painting.

DENISE, 20s, calm, paints on canvas.

INT. CREMATORIUM - AFTERNOON (REALITY)

NICOLE, 38, confused and distraught, holding urn of mother's Denise ashes.

ASHLEY, 37, sympathetic for Nicole, best friend.

Ashley hugs Nicole.

ASHLEY

I'm sorry Nicole. If you need anything, just call.

Nicole stands there.

NICOLE

I didn't even know she was sick. She never called me. I haven't talked to her since Mark and I were married. She shipped all her stuff to my place.

ASHLEY

Did you go through any of it yet?

NICOLE

No. The movers dropped the boxes off a couple of days ago. I'm anticipating over half of the boxes are going to be her artwork because all she did was paint.

ASHLEY

I'll give you a ride home and we can talk some other time. Try to get some sleep.

INT./EXT. ASHLEY'S CAR

NICOLE

Thank you for today.

ASHLEY

Girl, it's nothing.

NICOLE

It's so bizarre. It's not like we were ever close, I don't know what to even do once I look through her boxes.

ASHLEY

You don't have to rush it Nicole. Take your time. Even if you weren't close to her, she was still your mother.

NICOLE

Yeah.

Car falls silent. Nicole gets out the car and walks to apartment.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Full of boxes with Denise's stuff, minimalist style

NICOLE

If I am going to do this, I am going to need a drink and some music.

Nicole grabs a drink from the refrigerator and connects phone to speaker and plays music.

She crouches down and opens boxes and finds many of paintings.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Ugh. It's all just paintings.

Nicole rolls her eyes.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Why would she even send me this stuff?

Nicole fumbles through more boxes all just to find more paintings.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

It's a lot a bit too late to try to make a connection with me now, Mom.

Nicole stands up and sets the painting down.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
If she really wanted me in your
life, she would've made the effort.
Whatever, I do NOT need this.

Nicole stops unpacking the boxes, leaving many unopened and goes to bed.

EXT. PATIO OF A RESTAURANT - DAY SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Nicole and Ashley are out for Brunch, sunny, warm day

NICOLE
And they were all paintings!

ASHLEY
Every single box was filled with
paintings?

NICOLE
Well, I don't know if every box
was. I only opened a few.

ASHLEY
Then how do you know if all of them
were paintings?

Nicole shrugs and sips her drink.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
You want to know what I think?

Nicole fake smiles.

NICOLE
No, but you're going to tell me
anyway.

Ashley returns the same fake smile.

ASHLEY
Whatever.

Ashley rolls her eyes, but has a real smile.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I think that this actually might be
a good opportunity for you. Even if
you don't like to admit it, you
love your Mother. You just feel
abandoned by her. But she's not
here anymore.

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

And you are going to let yourself get swallowed up by your grief that you feel is invalid because you never knew your Mother. You might feel closer to her this way.

Nicole falls back in her chair with a big sigh.

NICOLE

Okay, I know you're a psychologist and all. But you did not have to analyze me.

Ashley rolls her eyes and laughs.

ASHLEY

You know that I am right, though.

Nicole jokingly glares at Ashley.

NICOLE

I don't know anything.

ASHLEY

Look, all I am saying is you been in a funk. You divorced Mark over a year ago and you been on auto-pilot ever since. I know hearing that your Mom has passed was the cherry on top. But I think that you can make this benefit you. It's all in your perspective, Nicole.

Ashley sips her drink.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Do something that would make you happy and spark your interest.

Nicole sulks and looks at Ashley.

NICOLE

Some more French toast would spark my interest.

ASHLEY

I know, right. They were really good.

Nicole nods her. Ashley orders more French Toast.

NICOLE

Actually, you know what was really interesting?

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

The paintings that I actually did look at, they all had the image: a weird looking lighthouse and a woman running on a beach.

ASHLEY

Maybe that was where she got her inspiration from?

Nicole shrugs.

NICOLE

I don't know. I don't know anything about her.

ASHLEY

Then use the paintings to learn. Talk to her mentors or those she inspired. Go to museums with her art, or start another gallery but featuring all her paintings she gave to you. You set up galleries with other artists, now do it with your Mother's work.

Nicole slouches in her chair and folds her arms.

NICOLE

But then, I would be doing it for her. I don't want to anything for her. What has she done for me?

ASHLEY

She has given you an opportunity to grow up. Plus, it's not even about her. It's about you and you dealing with your own feelings. So, stop being petty.

NICOLE

I know.

Nicole sighs and uncrosses her arms. Waiter enters, places food on table. Nicole smiles.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

This is all on your tab by the way.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

NICOLE

Time to grow up, huh?

Nicole plays music loudly.

MONTAGE OF NICOLE UNPACKING BOXES AND STARTING GALLERY

Nicole removes the paintings from the boxes that she opened earlier and sets them on the table.

Grabs box cutter and opens the rest of the boxes and piles paintings on table.

Finds kitchenware but takes liking to a specific mug.

Opens another box that is full of papers that she inspects then places on table next to paintings.

Folds down boxes and places in trash chute.

Cleans apartment.

Analyzes and organizes each painting for gallery.

INT. EMPTY STUDIO - DAY

Nicole buys the studio and is handed the keys by realtor.

Nicole places all the paintings in the studio and hangs them up.

After every painting is up, she looks around to admire her work.

INT. NICOLE'S GALLERY - NIGHT

Gallery's opening night, room is filled with people. Polished look.

Nicole hugs Ashley.

NICOLE

Thank you so much for coming.

ASHLEY

Of course, you did it. Your gallery looks beautiful as usual.

Nicole smiles brightly.

NICOLE

Thank you! I know I curate for other artists and I love it. But it feels good that I get to do this for me.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I wouldn't have done it if it wasn't for you. Even if I didn't want to hear it, you still told me the truth and gave me the push I needed.

ASHLEY

Oh, such praise. Why, thank you.

An attendee walks up to Nicole and asks her about an art piece.

NICOLE

Sorry, Ash. We'll catch up later.

ASHLEY

No problem, do your thing!

After Nicole talks to attendee, she stares at a painting. A man approaches her.

RICARDO, mid 20's, leathery skin, bleach blond hair, surfer accent.

RICARDO

This artist must really like the beach. She paints it in every piece.

NICOLE

Yes, have you found a painting that is interesting to you?

RICARDO

Oh, nah, I just came here because I saw the lighthouse. Reminds me of my home. I'm Ricardo, by the way.

NICOLE

Nicole, you had a lighthouse where you grew up?

RICARDO

Yeah man, it was actually the same one that she paints. Only Cardiff has a lighthouse that looks like that.

NICOLE

Cardiff?

RICARDO

Yeah, "Cardiff by the Sea, CBS," I grew up there.

(MORE)

RICARDO (CONT'D)

I used to paddle-board all the time there. But I needed some waves. So I go to the PO to surf some waves.

NICOLE

Huh, where is Cardiff?

RICARDO

It's in San Diego. It's a pretty small town. Anyway, I got this competition in Hawaii next week. I'm only here because my sister is having a baby and she wanted me to be there. I just left Cardiff, they still have the same lighthouse and the same people. Nothing about that place has changed. But the Sunset Cliffs are always nice to visit.

NICOLE

Thank you, Ricardo. I hope you enjoyed the Gallery.

Nicole walks over to Ashley.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Apparently, my Mom has been painting the town, Cardiff, this entire time.

ASHLEY

Cardiff? How you figure that out?

NICOLE

The surfer guy just walked up next to me and told me that he had the same lighthouse in his hometown. He is from Cardiff, San Diego.

ASHLEY

Wow, crazy. What does that have to do with your Mom, though?

NICOLE

I don't know, maybe she vacationed there once or something. I wouldn't know.

ASHLEY

Maybe she used to paint there all the time?

NICOLE

I have no clue.

ASHLEY

Well, your gallery is a success.
You have got celebrate!

NICOLE

Yes, celebrate indeed. At home, in
my bed, eating ice cream and
watching endless TV.

ASHLEY

Understand, partying is not hitting
like it used to.

NICOLE

We're almost forty. I don't want to
go party with 20 somethings anyway.
I am TIRED.

EXT. OUTSIDE GALLERY - NIGHT

Event is over. Nicole locks door to the gallery.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nicole drops car and apartment keys and unwinds on the couch.
She grabs her laptop off the coffee table and googles
"Cardiff." She locates the lighthouse and the ocean Ricardo
had mentioned.

NICOLE

It looks just like her paintings.
Seems like a pretty vacation spot.

Nicole closes her laptop, takes a shower and goes to bed.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Nicole shuffles around her apartment looking for where she
lasted placed her keys. She finds them in a drawer, sitting
on top of folded papers. Opens them, finds documents for an
adoption agency.

NICOLE

ACSD?

Nicole unfolds the papers and finds her mother's name.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Denise Sullivan? Adoption Center of
San Diego?

Nicole scans through the rest of the documents and looks up to the agency's number to call them.

INT. ADOPTION CENTER OF SAN DIEGO - MORNING

SARAH, PEPPY, DILIGENT, HELPFUL.

SARAH

Hello, this is Sarah of Adoption Center of San Diego, how may I help you?

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

NICOLE

Hello, Sarah, my name is Nicole Stewart. I wanted to get information on my mother, Denise Sullivan. I have her basic information letters, but I wanted to know more. How will I be able to access this info?

INT. ADOPTION CENTER OF SAN DIEGO - MORNING

SARAH

Oh, I am sorry Nicole, but I cannot share that type of information with you over the phone. You would have to come in person with proof of identity if you would like such information.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

NICOLE

I understand. Thank you, Sarah. You have been very helpful.

INT. ADOPTION CENTER OF SAN DIEGO - MORNING

SARAH

No problem, hope to see you soon.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nicole and Ashley are on the couch discussing Nicoles recent discovery.

NICOLE
I am still kind of in shock.

ASHLEY
Are you going to go to San Diego?

NICOLE
I want to. I don't know. I just think it might be the very thing I have been looking for. You been said so yourself. "Do something that will spark my interest."

Ashley smiles an arrogant grin and flips her hair.

ASHLEY
I did say that. I was right.

Nicole rolls her eyes and smiles.

NICOLE
Now seeing the lighthouse in every painting makes sense now. It's probably her hometown.

Nicole grabs the documents and looks at her mother's name.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Her last name was Sullivan. Denise Sullivan. I guess Grandmommy and Pops gave us the last name Stewart.

ASHLEY
That's very possible. I think you should go. Close the gallery for a little while, take a mini discovery vacation just for you. You deserve it.

NICOLE
I DO deserve it.

Nicole falls silent for moments

NICOLE (CONT'D)
I think I'll go.
(excitedly.)

EXT. OUTSIDE JFK AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Nicole grabs luggage out of trunk and walks to main check in doors. Phone RINGS.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

ASHLEY
Have you made it to the Airport
yet?

EXT. OUTSIDE JFK AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

NICOLE
Yeah, I just got here. I'm on my
way to check in.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

ASHLEY
Okay, be safe. Call me when you
last in San Diego.

EXT. OUTSIDE JFK AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

NICOLE
Sure thing.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

ASHLEY
I know it's going to be hard. But
try to calm down and relax. Take it
one step at a time. Just get
through the flight first.

EXT. OUTSIDE JFK AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Nicole sighs.

NICOLE
You're right. Let me just get to my
gate on time so I won't miss my
flight.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

ASHLEY
That's the spirit. Speaking of
spirit, you ain't taking Spirit
Airlines, are you?

EXT. OUTSIDE JFK AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Nicole laughs.

NICOLE

Umm, nooo. I know better than that.
I'll call you later. Bye.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Ashley laughs.

ASHLEY

Just checking, bye.

MONTAGE OF NICOLE LANDING

INT./EXT. INSIDE TAXI IN SAN DIEGO - LATER

Nicole calls Ashley to check in and arrives at the hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Nicole drops her luggage in her room and looks out at the view of Cardiff.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ADOPTION AGENCY - LATER

Nicole walks in through front door and approaches front desk.

INT. ACSD'S FRONT DESK - AFTERNOON

NICOLE

Hello, I called here last week. I
wanted to get information on my
Mother.

RECEPTIONIST

What is your mother's name?

NICOLE

Denise A. Sullivan

RECEPTIONIST

May I see your identification?

Nicole hands the receptionist her files.

Receptionist looks through ID and matches with Denise's profile.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Okay, you're good to go. I'll get the file now.

NICOLE
Thank you.

Receptionist reappear, hands papers to Nicole.

RECEPTIONIST
This is all of Denise A. Sullivan's file.

Nicole scans through the papers quickly.

NICOLE
Thank you so much.

Nicole exits the building to get in the car.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ADOPTION AGENCY - LATER

Nicole reads through the file.

NICOLE
Mary Sullivan? James Sullivan?

Nicole flips through more pages of the file.

Nicole finds the address of her maternal grandmother's house.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
3842 Cathy Lane.

Nicole takes her phone out and programs a route.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
She's only just 30 minutes away.

Nicole's ride drives up and she gets in the car going back to the hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nicole lays on bed in silence.

NICOLE

Why do I feel so nervous all of the sudden? It's not like I have to see her first thing in the morning tomorrow. So just calm down. Get some sleep.

Nicole puts down her phone and tries to go to sleep.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Nicole wakes up and does her morning routine. Walks in bathroom looks at mirror.

NICOLE

I can just sight-see for today and if I get enough courage, I'll go say hi.

Nicole leaves the hotel.

Montage of Sightseeing

Nicole goes to see the lighthouse.

Goes to the beach.

Takes a ride to Sunset Cliffs.

On her way back to the hotel, she sees that she is only 5 minutes away from her grandmother's house.

Asks driver to drop her off at her grandmother's address.

Nicole gets out the car.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

Nicole makes her way to the front door

NICOLE

It's okay, don't be nervous. She could be dead and the documents aren't updated. Some other person could be living here. That's pretty morbid, but definitely possible.

Nicole continues to walk to front door.

She shakes her arms and hands.

Immediately presses doorbell and knocks.

Door swings open.

 Hello.

 NICOLE (CONT'D)

THE END.