

Bourne
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Dunster Beach

by Richard Lewis

“Hello old timer, would you share your story with me?” asked the new kid on the block.

“Oh, so you’re the new arrival we’ve been expecting. Want me to fill you in?” creaked the old timer.

“Yes, what’s the place like?”

“Well, I’ve seen it all over the years. I was the first to grace this stretch of sand back in the nineteen twenties.”

“You must like it here.”

“Yes and no.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well it was a lonely existence at first, especially out of season. Even now during the chill winter months I find it hard and seem to lose my sense of purpose.”

“Sounds like it gets lonely.”

“It does, especially when the wind sneers at me, rattling my shingles. My walls drip with discontent. I shiver and creak like an ice bound ship, stranded in the arctic, staring out on the hammered depths of the Bristol Channel.”

“Wow, that’s bleak, old timer.”

“Yes, it is, but in the spring the place comes back to life. The sun returns from its sabbatical and the beach sighs a gentle smile, bringing families once again. The place throbs with life as laughing children eagerly gobble up their allotted portion of carefree days.”

“Now, that sounds more like it,” the new kid beamed.

“Yes, even my old timbers feel young again. By the way, those naked boards will need a lick of paint and don’t forget the ‘green rule’.”

“Green rule, what’s that?”

“All chalets must be painted green. Not that I can talk. My wrinkled skin hasn’t seen the wet end of a paintbrush for more than twenty years.”

“You do seem a bit neglected. Perhaps we could both get a new paint-job?”

“Oh! that would be fine.”

“So what else goes on during summer?”

“Well, families bring their dramas with them. I keep a watch out for swimmers getting into trouble and remember two brothers, Patrick and Tim. Patrick the elder was a good swimmer but Tim could only manage a few strokes. Their friends had come for the day and they were excited about going in the sea together. Lora, their mother impressed on them not to go into the water when the tide was going out. Currents could be treacherous and the sea, dragged by the weary moon, seems to go out for miles and then return all in a rush, as if it can’t wait to see me again.”

“So, what happened?”

“The boys waited for the tide to turn and made their way out across the wet sand but something was wrong. I tried to warn their mother but could only manage a feeble rattle of my window panes and she wasn’t paying attention”.

“I knew it wouldn’t end well.”

