

Jerry Mullins

The Vision

The older man was reluctant to take the young boy to the shoreline where the accident occurred. It had been a grisly scene, with difficulty identifying the bodies as an ocean storm delayed recovery.

But the man was drawn to the beach. Family vacations there had given them many happy years. His daughter, Mary, the boy's mother, had in particular loved the beach, with seagulls soaring in from the ocean to the crescent of fine sand, and waves crashing loudly on the rocky point at the end. She had grown into a fine young woman, but linked up with a reckless young man.

The young boy had a hard time with the loss of his parents. The Grandfather was saddened to hear the boy cry himself to sleep at night. Months eased the pain of remembrance and the boy developed a shell of maturity far beyond his years, withdrawing to protect himself.

As they walked the beach the boy and his Grandfather saw a boat, speeding left to right down the beach, coming closer as the beach curved. He heard, or thought he heard, one of the boys on the beach call out, "Mary!" But he could not be sure, for he knew with age his eyes, and ears, and mind, at times played tricks on him in ways he did not understand. His thoughts took him back to a day on that same beach when his daughter as a very young girl said "Daddy, I love you. You are the best Father in the world for bringing me here." His weathered face broke quickly to produce a smile of remembrance and the soft, gentle lines of a younger man came over his face.

The man held his grandson's hand, as the boat came closer to shore. At that instant, he very clearly saw Mary and her husband in the boat, laughing and waving to the boys on the

shore. He turned his head away to hide sudden tears from the boy. As he recovered and turned to face the boy, neither of them said a word on the vision what they had just seen. Both continued to look at the boat as it faded into the distance.

The boy looked directly into his Grandfather's eyes, his face showing a luminous peace and said, "I understand now, and it's alright. Maybe my Mom and Dad are happy. I will be alright."

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He walked the beach, and saw his children splash in the surf just as he had with his parents, and after they were gone, with his Grandfather, and then alone, after his Grandfather was gone. The fine white sand and the dunes had not changed, even with countless storms over the years, and he knew they would never change, only shifting their shape and size from time to time. The sea grass waved in the breeze as if to greet him as he walked toward the wet sand of the shoreline to cool his feet. He looked out to the ocean for a boat to see if his Mother and Father would pass. He did not see them, but he knew they were there.

Jerry Mullins grew up in central West Virginia, and has lived in the Washington, DC suburbs in recent years. His work has recently been published in or is forthcoming from *Columbia University Journal-Catch and Release*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Tower Journal*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Newfound Journal*, *Foliate Oak*, *Literary Yard*, *Literary Nest*, and internationally in *Nazar-Look* (Romania) and *Southern Cross Review*(Argentina).