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Thanks to Kat from Charlottesville for sharing this story!

The Cove

One

Liana opened her eyes with a groan, turning her head to look at her surroundings. Her long, shimmery auburn hair fell on her face and she swatted it away. The 13-year-old girl stood up and looked down at the Therm-A-Rest she had been laying on. There was no sign of Reisha, Amira, or Pari, her best friends. She turned and walked down the rocky beach, yelling their names a couple of times. Nobody responded so Liana started to walk back to the tent, to pack up their supplies. Something shining caught her eye on the plain, rocky beach. Liana picked up a tarnished silver chain and moved the rock that the rest of it was stuck under. The gray, chunky pebble was tossed to the side as Liana tugged on the silver chain. A small, whitish-silver ring almost hit her in the face as the chain was finally pulled free. She rubbed the ring with her thumb and it started glowing blue. This is odd, she thought. She pulled the ring off its chain and stuck it in her pocket to look at later. Her vision was starting to be obscured, turning white around the edges. Liana started to panic, just wanting her friends, wishing she had never found this ring.

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She was in a clearing surrounded by tall pine trees. Liana looked around curiously, her luminous green eyes gazed over a mysterious looking cavern. She felt the ring grow heavier and burn her sides, she had placed the ring and its chain into the pocket of her windbreaker. Liana stepped towards the cave and saw a blue light shine inside. The ring has a glow like that as well, She contemplated. Liana looked down and pulled the ring from her pocket, the ring was glowing too. Stashing the ring back into her coat, she turned and raced away from the cave and its mysteries. She had wondered what all this meant, the ring and its chain, the cave, and both of them hurting her the more she kept thinking about it. Stumbling over a murky green brook, she had almost tripped and dropped the ring near the stream. She luckily caught it mid-air and stuffed it back into her pocket, zipping it up this time. Liana knew she needed to tell Pari about this, for she was an expert on jewelry and gems of all sorts. She set up a new campsite by the beach where she found the mysterious ring. Liana waited there until the sun shined no more and her eyes had closed.

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Amira sat in silence. She turned to look at her lifelong best friend, Pari, giving her a knowing look of worry and doubt. The three girls knew that Liana had wandered away, as usual. Liana was known for imagining weird scenarios and all, she was known for having a wild imagination and for being incredibly forgetful. They were sitting on a rocky beach collecting assorted seashells. Once the sun had fully gone down Amira saw a vivid blue light shine a few meters away from them.

“Reisha, Pari, look,” Amira whispered, the others turned and stared at the magical view. Amira hoped that whatever was making that sight was Liana. She pushed herself up from the ground and grabbed her friends’ wrists to help them up. They carefully walked over to what seemed like a tent, and they unzipped the cover and the light shined brighter than before.

“Liana?” Pari cried, “Is that you?” She covered her eyes with her palms and took off her magenta glasses. The blue dimmed and a dark silhouette was shown.

“Don’t fret, it’s me,” Liana calmly stated, “I found something I want you all to see.” She held out a white ring but then wrapped her hands around the jewel and instantly a hue of blue showed through the empty spaces.

Whoa, Amira thought. The girls sat down inside the tent, huddling around Liana and her find. She watched as Liana opened her fingers, and the girls all gasped as the tent was flooded with blue light.

“When I rub it with my fingers, I get teleported to this weird cave,” Liana admitted. She seemed embarrassed but very proud of her find, she passed it to her friends, who examined the ring cautiously. When the other girls clutched this extraordinary ring the light went dull and all was dark again.

“I don’t get it, why doesn’t it glow for me?” Reisha complained, acting half her age, pouting she tossed it back to Liana. She gave a warning glare. Reisha looked away nervously and started whispering to Amira quickly, “I don’t know why it doesn’t work for me! I’m special, too,” Reisha cried, returning a glare to Liana.

“Can everyone stop being so hostile? Please, it’s giving me a headache,” Pari said quietly, still examining the ring, “It seems as if the ring produces a special energy that is activated by you, Liana, I just don’t know what it could be,” She took Liana’s wrists and peered closely in the dimming light, “There could be something in your DNA, genetics, or blood make-up.” Liana pulled her hand away, reminding Pari of her fear of the paranormal and all things bloody.

“Reisha, I bet it’s nothing, listen to what Pari said. Liana must have something special in her, the rest of us don’t.” Amira protested, squeezing Reisha in a hug, “Don’t worry, if you want a trinket, I’ll find you one!” Reisha seemed a bit happier with that statement and hugged her friend back.

Soon enough the sun started to rise and the girls were ravenous and starved. They walked along the beach and talked about what had happened and how Liana found this
ring. Liana could still feel the ring and it's chain burn her sides, but why? She quickly stuffed the ring and clanky chain deeper into her jacket's pockets. Liana felt a piercing glare from Reisha, knowing that something was amiss. Though Reisha kept her silence and continued whispering something to herself.

The girls walked up to a battered and old cottage in a clearing surrounded by cypress trees. They all knew they were far from their tent and past the rocky beach. Amira stopped as the girls kept up their pace, she picked up an old and rusty button. She knew she could turn this into a not so fancy necklace for Reisha, seeming she still longed for jewelry. Pulling out a foot long strand of yarn, she threaded the piece through the button’s holes and tied the string at the top.

“Reisha, I made you a necklace,” Amira tapped her friend on the shoulder and grinned. Reisha took the necklace and pulled it over her head, as the bobby pins in her blonde bun fell out of place. The blonde curls bounced upon her shoulders happily. The two friends hugged each other again and Amira caught up with the group.

“Everyone! Amira made me a necklace!” Reisha bragged, a huge grin on her face. She twirled and there showed the beauty in the button necklace as it was glowing a bronze hue. Liana gasped and smiled, Pari frowned and started walking again, turning away from her three friends.

“Pari? Don’t you like Reisha’s necklace?” Liana questioned, the girls ran over to Pari and stood in front of her, attempting to block her path.

“I do like it, though I feel bad energy coming from this...button…” Pari touched the button and shuddered, “I just have a bad feeling about this charm.” Reisha grimaced and took back the button, turning to fix the placement.

“How can you feel bad energy from a button? It’s old and rusty,” Amira asked, looking quite hurt.

“I just have a feeling that it’s possessed by magic or some sort of witchcraft,” Pari said, blankly. She motioned for the group to forget it and kept walking. They reached the door of the house and Liana knocked.

“No one’s home, odd,” Liana pushed open the doors and stepped inside. The walls were decorated in black and white photos and covered in a striped wallpaper in different shades of green. The photos had a picture of a family, a family that felt very familiar to Liana.

“Liana, do you know those people?” Pari asked, unsurely. Liana smiled a bit as she stared at the photos. She traced her fingers over the glass frame til she came up to a rather odd photo. It was an old family photo of a couple, three kids, and one of them was ripped out.

“No, I don’t. But these images do feel quite familiar, I don’t know what it is about them,” Liana said, mesmerized. She tried to forget about the ripped photo so she went around
the hallway. A rickety old staircase greeted her, “Guys! Come in here!” Liana called, her friends immediately followed her voice.

Kat also shared this image of a horse with us: