

Chapter One

When you live with a secret that has defined your entire existence, you're like a donut. A big round Dunkin. The secret that you can't talk about to another living being is the black hole, the void, the giant nothingness at the core of your being...

With a wry smile, Ben took another slow bite of his chocolate-covered glazed. *Living alone for so long has made me strange*, he thought.

But there were times when Ben Asterman could no longer avoid the truth: he wasn't like everyone else. It seemed to him that most people probably had the same thought about themselves at some point in their lives, but usually they were wrong. And he wasn't.

For the most part, he was able to function like regular people and stayed sane by keeping his mind from wandering into subjects that were best avoided, like family. And sometimes he could even forget for a while just how different he was.

Purposely pushing away the dark thoughts that seemed to follow him lately, Ben finished the last of his donut and looked up through the trees, watching the clouds glide smoothly to the west. After a few moments of enjoying the sky, he gathered his pencils and drawing pad to his lap and gazed around for the best subject to use for his sketch this morning. Eastvale Park was a great spot in the center of town and he often came here to draw or paint. Another beautiful day in New England. Another day living the dream - painting, creating, almost making a living being the artist he always intended to be. And another day alone.

"That's just part of moving to a new city," he muttered as he watched two high school kids come up the path, arms wrapped around each other. Getting on friendly terms with the locals didn't happen fast in Connecticut. Or in a lot of places. But if your great-grandparents hadn't been born in this town, then you would always be an outsider. At least Ben had that going for him - his grandparents and their parents before them had actually grown up here, and when his grandmother had died just a couple of months after his grandfather's passing last year, she had left their house to Ben. He'd always been curious about that. He'd been close to his grandparents and loved to come visit, but he had a lot of cousins and often wondered why she had decided to leave the house to him alone.

At any rate, when Ben had finished his art degree, rather than moving to New York or another big city where he might have a better chance of gaining a quick foothold in the art world, he had opted for the small town life of Rockport, Connecticut and getting by on his meager inheritance and a rent-free home.

He also needed the time, he felt, to finally come to terms with the separation from his family. For years, it had been like

a dead weight in his chest, especially losing contact with his little sister Meagan.

I have no idea what she looks like now, he thought, *or if she even remembers me.*

Ben shook his head and went back to his sketch of the park scene which he'd started. Head bent to his work, he grinned as he listened to the lascivious thoughts of the young couple walking past his park bench.

"And this is the best use of your talent?"

Ben paused, replaying the voice he had just heard. He looked at his drawing and then around where he was sitting, wondering if someone had been speaking to him.

"I wasn't talking about your art."

Now Ben froze, gripping his pencil in a white-knuckled hand. Time seemed to slow and then stop. Unconsciously he released the pencil, letting it fall to the paper and roll off slowly to the ground. As he lifted his head, Ben slid his gaze to his left and then to the right. He saw no one, but a strange feeling in his gut told him it was true. He had heard the voice in his head.

He hesitated, and then ventured a thought. *"Who.. who are you?"*

"What we're discussing here is how you are using your talent. Eavesdropping on hormone-soaked teenagers? That's the best you can do? Really?"

Along with his rising panic, Ben felt a twinge of guilt. The voice was correct, after all. He had devolved, had justified using his ability for menial tasks, by saying it was 'practice'. He jerked back to the moment - who the hell was speaking to his mind?

"Orion. I'm Orion, and you appear to be wasting a large part of your life."

Offended, Ben blurted out, "That's not true!"

"No need to answer me aloud, is there?"

Abruptly realizing his jaw had dropped, Ben closed his mouth. *"Uh, no. I guess not. Look, I've never done this. Never..."* Then Ben realized that for the first time in his entire twenty-four years, he was having a telepathic conversation. And it was amazing.

Chapter Two

"Never spoken with another telepath? I figured as much. You appear to need a little input. So here it is: Don't listen in on other people just for entertainment."

"But I..." Ben stopped. He realized any excuse would just sound lame. He looked around the park again. *"I don't need advice from people I can't even see."*

"Look, we need to cover some basics first," Orion thought to him. *"Starting with the assumption that since you have the ability to read minds, you probably believe in other things beyond what you can see and touch, correct?"*

Ben was torn between continuing one of the most intriguing conversations he'd had to date and forcing the speaker to show himself. He decided he didn't want to antagonize someone who could possibly explain to him why he'd been born this way. *"I don't know what I believe. All I know is you're the first person I've met - almost met - who can do this too. And with twenty plus years of looking, that's saying something."*

Orion's voice came into his mind again, calm yet strangely commanding, *"This is something I've been doing for longer than I can tell you. As you probably know, it's both a gift and a curse. There are many things I want to explain to you, but we need to get something out of the way first. Ben, for now I want you to just sit back and take a breath."*

"Okay," Ben replied, suddenly nervous and excited at the same time. He ventured a quick glance around the park and didn't see anyone. It was the quiet part of the morning before people started to pass through the park on their way to lunch. Ben listened for someone approaching and heard nothing. He consciously took another breath and attempted to relax. And that was when he saw a movement out of the corner of his eye.

There, in the giant oak tree at the edge of the clearing near his bench, a hawk had landed on one of the larger branches. The bird was regal and beautiful and looking straight at him.

Ben again looked around, searching for the speaker.

"Ben," the voice came inside his head again.

Shaking his head, Ben looked again at the hawk. *No way,* he thought. *There's got to be someone around here...*

He felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise up, and his stomach knotted in disbelief.

"Ben," came the voice again.

Ben discovered a hoarse sound emerging from his throat. "Wha... what."

"I am Orion."

Ben swallowed and began to inch backwards, dropping his drawing pad in the process. Too many late nights, too much time alone. It all came crashing down on him now. He'd had to accept many strange things in his life, but this was beyond the pale. It wasn't happening, he decided, and that's all there was to it. Ben turned away from the hawk, convincing himself that what he was seeing from the corner of his eye was only an apparition of his own mind.

"Look at me." Quietly and firmly, the voice commanded him. Ben felt his head turn back to the hawk, as the voice continued, *"You think that humans are the only entities capable of speech, of thought? Think again. You're simply the only ones capable of the self-absorption required to believe you have such singular talents."*

He couldn't think, couldn't speak. *Could this be real?* His mind searched for reason, unable to land on any trace of logic. He didn't take drugs, he wasn't running a fever. And this was just plain crazy. A bird, a hawk that could not only think, but also communicate? Ben started to stand, to leave and go home to safety, to normal.

But in the midst of rising, he realized he couldn't. To finally meet another telepath in any form was such a gift - to speak with a kindred spirit who could understand what had made him so separate from all other humans for his entire life.

Resolved, Ben sat back and turned to face the hawk. He looked at the bird and quietly thought to him, *"Orion."*

The hooded eyes pierced him with their intense gaze. "Yes," he replied and flew down to the far end of the bench.

Surprised, Ben pulled back until he realized there was only air behind him. Then he decided he was going to accept what was and just go forward from here. Sucking in a deep breath, he faced the hawk, a mere four feet away.

Orion wasn't really as large as he had seemed at first glance, but at this close distance his size was more defined by his compelling presence. The soft white feathers of his chest and underbelly, the brown and speckled feathers of his head and back were accented by the striking brick-red tail feathers barely visible from this side. The sharply hooked bill and the strong talons enforced his intimidating demeanor.

"Okay," Ben said quietly. "Okay," he repeated to Orion. He felt incapable of saying more.

"This is a lot to absorb in one sitting, Ben. And there is more I need to tell you. But first, it would be good if you could tell me more about how you developed your ability."

Head down, Ben vigorously rubbed his face with both hands and thought, *Do I continue this exchange, go forward or go back? So tempting to stay in my safe existence and not have to consider that there are others as strange - or even more so - than me.*

He lifted his head and looked at Orion. "I haven't sent my thoughts to anyone before."

"Just the other side of the coin," Orion responded. His mental voice seemed less stern to Ben now, and even held a touch of humor. Suddenly, with little effort, Orion lifted from his rest on the park bench and flew to an overhanging branch in a nearby oak. "You might be more at ease for now with some distance between us, and also maybe it won't alarm anyone else in the park."

Ben nodded. "Thanks. That is better. Sorry." He paused, wondering if this creature truly wanted to know his mundane past.

"Oh, most certainly," the hawk thought to him.

Ben looked up at Orion with continued amazement. "I haven't consciously done this, as you know. There's not much to my story. When I first... when I learned that I could read minds, I was fairly young, but then something happened. So I quit doing it." He drew in air between his teeth and finished his brief history. "Since I moved here, I've spent a lot of time by myself. I've visited with a few old friends of my grandparents and have met some people in town, just well enough to say hello. But it takes a while to make new friends. So I just recently decided to experiment with mind reading again. Kind of a weird hobby, I guess." Ben glanced upward, certain that even this unique hawk would also think he was peculiar.

Orion flipped the tip of his wing. "Weird is always relative. How long have you been in this area?"

"About a year. I'm an artist - consequently, I work by myself. It doesn't give me many opportunities to meet people. But I enjoy coming to the park. And this is what I do sometimes when I'm here," he concluded with a small shrug.

"Hey, it's impressive that you still have the ability. Generally, when most young telepaths drop this pastime, for whatever reason, they don't remember it at all later in life."

Ben grimaced and thought, "I wasn't being totally honest when I said I'd quit. In fact, I couldn't make it go away when I tried. But I never spoke about it again. Until now." He paused and focused on Orion. "In all my travels, I haven't come across anyone else - human or otherwise - who could do this." Ben thought for moment, looking off into the sky. "It's... reassuring to meet another creature that can talk to me this way."

"I know other humans, Ben, who can communicate with their minds," Orion thought to him.

Ben interrupted, forgetting to send his thoughts telepathically. "You do?"

"Yes." Orion paused for a moment, and then asked, "Do you want me to arrange a meeting? Say, tomorrow or the next day, here at the park?"

Standing up in his excitement, Ben again said aloud, "Are you kidding?"

"Excuse me, sir?"

Startled, Ben looked around to see who had spoken. He felt like he was coming out of a dream. A gray-haired man in a suit was standing nearby, appraising Ben with an apparent mixture of suspicion and concern.

"Yes?" Ben answered, struggling to bring himself back to normal conversation.

"Um, are you all right?"

"Yes - I mean, no - I'm fine. Sorry. I'm, uh... talking to a friend. Sorry." Ben finished lamely, tapping on an imaginary phone bud in his ear.

The man nodded skeptically and backed away, muttering "Okay, whatever you say."

* * *

Orion flew along the Connecticut coastline the next day, gliding on the updrafts for long stretches and enjoying the sea air. As he came closer to his destination, he veered lightly toward a rock wall that ran for several hundred feet along the tree line.

He coasted downward in a circular pattern, eyeing a large home and other outbuildings below. Through the trees, he spotted Rosanna running out the back door of the house.

She ran as if a ghost were at her back, then she laughed and Orion knew that it was only the way she did things - far and fast, as if this moment was the only moment. She ran past the roses clinging to the rough stone walls, to the small and delicate flowers along the shadowed side of the wall.

There she abruptly halted, seating herself with little grace on the stone bench at the farthest side. After a quick glance at the sky, she pulled a tangerine from her pocket along with a crumpled napkin. She leaned back against the cool stone behind her and began to peel the tangerine, tossing the rind into the hedge at the end of the bench. Her brown hair glided gently to frame her round face, and she bit her lip, concentrating on her task.

As he slowly coasted down in a wide arc, Orion thought about Ben and then about the two children who were his friends. *It's a shame how natural abilities are blunted by simple disbelief. But regaining this talent has been easier for Rosanna. And even more so for Daniel, he mused. He's learned very fast to use a gift he didn't even realize he had. Being deaf may be the reason, and being five years old is probably a big help, too. Anything seems possible when you're young.*

He landed gracefully at the top of the wall. Rosanna jumped at his sudden appearance. Then in her ritual greeting, she held up her hand to him - with thumb, forefinger and small finger extended. *"I love you,"* she signed to Orion. She also formed the words to him in her mind, the language she now shared with both Orion and her brother Daniel.

"I brought you a piece of trout that Clancy caught," she thought to him, as she unfolded the napkin and tossed the meat up to him. Quietly, a thought passed through her mind - *Dad won't even take time to fish any more...* She looked back to Orion, thinking, *"I was afraid you might not come today."*

"Why would you worry?" he asked her while eyeing the fish. It was a break from his normal rodent diet and he enjoyed the variety. He ripped at the pink flesh before completing his answer to Rosanna. *"I came by yesterday, but it was late. Anyway, I just wanted to see if you felt like meeting another telepath."*

Rosanna's mouth dropped open. Blurting out in normal speech, she answered, *"Yes! There are others?"*

Then she heard the click of the back door. Ms. Crump, the housekeeper, appeared on the patio with a flower basket and scissors, apparently coming into the garden to cut roses for the house.

"Rosanna, who are you talking to? Is there someone else out here?" She craned her neck to look around the garden.

The bushes that climbed the wall conveniently hid Orion from her view, allowing Rosanna to explain. *"Oh, I just saw an iguana over by the step. Don't you see him? He seems friendly - I don't think he bites..."*

By mid-response, Ms. Crump had decided the rose cutting could wait. Rosanna again heard the soft click of the back door.

'Good thinking!' Orion thought to her, and then briefly reviewed his encounter with Ben. *"Now, can you arrange to come to Eastvale Park tomorrow to meet Mr. Asterman?"*

She frowned. *"He's old, isn't he? I was hoping..."*

"I know you would like a friend your age to share this with," Orion thought. *"We just haven't found one yet. But we will, I promise you. In the meantime, Mr. Asterman is relatively young and he needs to speak with someone who is like him. He didn't know there were any others and he's anxious to meet you. Think you can make it into town tomorrow?"*

Rosanna nodded. *"I think so. Once in a while Clancy lets me ride into town with him. What time?"*

"Can you be there, say about two o'clock? I'll be close by to watch over you."

"I'll be there!" Rosanna replied.

Chapter Three

The following day when Orion arrived at his favorite tree in Eastvale Park, he realized Ben was already sitting on the same bench as before. He was running his fingers through his sandy blond hair, looking at the people around the park and occasionally up at the surrounding trees. He seemed tired, and Orion realized from Ben's thoughts that he had waited at the park yesterday on the chance that he might get to meet Orion's friends.

Then Orion saw Rosanna walking toward Ben, swinging her arms and enjoying the spring in everything around her. She knew Orion was there, but without glancing up at him, she sent a thought to Ben in the way Orion had coached her. *"Hello, friend of the hawk!"*

Startled, Ben looked around and saw Rosanna smiling at him. His initial response was one of surprise. He started to speak and then realized he had no need. *"Yes! Hello!"* Unthinking, he stood and smiled broadly at the child, a beautiful girl with such a positive feeling around her. *"The hawk didn't tell me you were a girl, a child. What does it matter? I'm so glad to meet you!"*

"I'm Rosanna," she said, holding out her hand to Ben. Impressed with the moment, she stated formally, *"Rosanna Lee Keane."*

Ben solemnly shook her hand, and then seemed at a momentary loss for words.

"Do you want to go sit by that fountain?" Rosanna asked aloud, trying to put him at ease.

"Sure," Ben said and followed her to sit next to a quiet fountain situated near the center of the park. The area was dotted with people, some reading books and others talking in small groups.

"Rosanna... I don't know where to start," he thought. *"Where are you from? How did you learn this? Have you... where are your parents?"*

She smiled at him. He seemed nice, but asked a lot of questions at once. *"We live just outside of town, in a house on the beach. My family has lived there a long time. My mother..."* she paused and took a slight breath before continuing, *"My mother died last year. My father works a lot. He's a geologist."*

Ben received a vague picture of a trim man in his mid to late thirties, his face drawn. In the picture Rosanna unconsciously brought up, the man was turning to walk away.

Rosanna, unaware of the picture Ben had received, continued, *"How we learned this way of talking - mostly because of the hawk. Orion. He's with us, up there in the tree. Do you see him?"*

Ben looked up and smiled, giving Orion a thought Rosanna could overhear. "Thank you, Orion."

The hawk slowly blinked, remaining silent.

Ben turned back to Rosanna. "May I ask how old you are?"

"Eleven," she answered. "I have a brother, Daniel, who's five. He's deaf with his ears, but not with his mind. How old are you?"

"Twenty-four," Ben thought to her, with a laugh in his mind. "How long have you been able to speak this way?"

"Not very long, and I don't think I do it very well. I've been practicing for several months. After we met Orion, he began to teach us."

"How did you meet Orion?" Ben was becoming very adept at the fluidity of mind-speech, its speed and total honesty.

"It was a few months ago. We, I mean - Daniel and I - were at the beach by our house. The weather was still cold, but not freezing. We wanted to be out of the house and went to feed the gulls. I..." She grimaced and continued, "I wasn't watching Daniel very well. I was ahead of him, throwing bread up in the air for the birds."

"Daniel was trying to keep up with me, running behind me and he tripped over something, I guess. I didn't know it and he wasn't able to call out. The waves were starting to wash up over him and the water was like ice. I heard a voice saying, 'Help him! Help him!' I turned and saw the hawk, and then Daniel. I ran and pulled him out of the water - he had panicked and was freezing. I didn't have time to think about the voice then."

"I rushed Daniel back to the house to get him dry clothes and to try to warm him up. He was shivering so hard. The next day, I was in the garden. I was ashamed of myself for not watching out for Daniel. He was okay, but when I thought of what could have happened... Then I heard the same voice saying, 'You'll do better next time - that's what life is about... to learn'. I realized that the voice was in my head, not out loud." Rosanna looked at Ben, waiting for his response.

Ben glanced up at Orion and then thought to Rosanna, "Pretty freaky, I know. I had a similar experience recently."

Rosanna nodded vigorously in agreement. "So then I looked up and there was the hawk, sitting on the wall above me. I asked him if he was thinking into my head. He said yes, and told me that all of us are able to send thoughts, but that most people are simply not aware."

Ben nodded with understanding. He thought he felt a shiver, then realized the tremor was on the inside. He could barely contain his excitement at meeting someone who had this same ability which he had been forced to hide for so long.

Rosanna continued, "I asked Orion why I hadn't ever had this happen with my father, or my friends at school. I didn't understand why a bird would have it. He told me 'God has given all of us this

ability. And sometimes we do use it - we just think it's our own mind talking.' Then he said that Daniel and I could learn very quickly, that we both had advanced capabilities."

"Capabilities?" Ben gently suggested, unconsciously leaning forward to hear Rosanna's story as she sat on the grass in front of him. Her language skills were very advanced for her age, but she still mangled a word now and then.

Rosanna nodded. "Yes, capabilities."

"So how did you get where you are now?" he prompted.

"Over the next several months, we had classes," she continued. "We practiced the process over and over - as Orion says - 'the acceptance and the focus' - necessary to receive thoughts and to send them. After we got better at that part of it, he also began to teach us ways to block thoughts - the thoughts of others that we didn't want to receive, like when we were in a crowd. And also to block our thoughts from being transmitted to others when we do not want them to be heard. He said we each need to know how to preserve our privacy, physical or mental."

Ben broke in, "I've had the same thing happen - sometimes there are too many voices coming in and I don't know how to stop them."

Orion spoke to him from the tree, "That will be the first thing on our lesson plan, Ben. We can begin later this evening."

Ben gratefully acknowledged this and then thought to himself, "But this girl is just a kid and she's already better than I am."

Rosanna glanced up at Orion and tried to hide her grin. It was kind of fun for her, knowing more about something than an adult.

Ben flushed, embarrassed. He had forgotten - he didn't know how to shield his thoughts - he had never needed to before.

Rosanna explained, "We've been working with Orion almost everyday for several months, Ben. So we're getting better all the time. But he doesn't like me to try it on other people".

Orion added, "I've tried to explain to Rosanna that what you do to others in life comes back to you. This gift should be used for a higher purpose than dipping into people's minds for your own entertainment."

Ben accepted a small pang of guilt at the comment, then continued his conversation with Rosanna. They talked, mentally, for the rest of the afternoon. When Rosanna realized that it was already five o'clock, she jumped up with a start and said aloud, "I was supposed to meet Clancy, our handyman, by four-thirty back at the hardware store. I've got to go!"

Regretfully, Ben watched her leave. He felt like someone who had been starved for months, coming upon a banquet. He couldn't seem to get enough of the mind-talk and the totally new experiences that went along with it.

He and Orion agreed to meet later that evening and discussed directions to his home. Ben told him that he would leave a bright

red tablecloth on his patio table that Orion could spot from the air.

* * *

When Rosanna met Clancy he was very upset with her, or very relieved - sometimes it was hard for Rosanna to tell with adults - he said he had been all over town looking for her. She told him she had been at the library - which was right across the street from the park - and had been reading a great book and lost track of the time.

Clancy let her out before putting the truck in the garage and she ran in the side door, trying to avoid her father, William. *Not that it would be too hard*, she thought, almost in anger. Since her mother had died, he spent most of his time in his office, going over maps and often working through dinner.

She ran on up to Daniel's room. He was curled up on his bed, crying. *"What's the matter?"* she thought to him. She couldn't stand to see Daniel upset. His life was hard enough, it seemed to her, without having someone hurt him.

"I wanted to go ride my pony and Dad wouldn't let me go because no one could go with me. I'm big enough to go by myself. I wouldn't get hurt!" He was angry with everyone and with her, she thought, for not being here.

"Forget about that now - I have a fantastic surprise for you!"

"What? Did you bring me something from town?" His tears were miraculously vanishing.

"In a way," she thought and hoped he wouldn't be disappointed. *"I met a friend of Orion's today. A man named Ben Asterman. He can send thoughts like we can!"*

"There's someone else like us, 'Ro?"

"Yes! I want you to meet him. I'm going to try to see him again in town this week and maybe we can work out some way for you to meet him soon." Rosanna thought Clancy might not let her take Daniel into town on her own. But having Clancy around when they met Ben would be too awkward.

* * *

Over the next week and a half, Rosanna managed to come into town several times, although Clancy quizzed her about her sudden interest in the library.

She and Ben spent those days much as they had the first day, in getting to know one another better than most people do, even after years of friendship.

On Thursday afternoon in the park, Ben sat on a bench while Rosanna sat in the grass a few feet away. As they talked, she absent-mindedly pulled blades of grass, ripping them into thin

strips. The current topic was the tribulation of being eleven years old.

"I'm old enough to take care of myself. I don't know why Clancy won't let me ride my bike into town."

"What does your Dad say about it?" Ben asked, reaching down to pull a wide strip of grass. Privately, he agreed that she was too young to make a trip like that on her own, but didn't want to preach.

"He doesn't say much anymore..." Rosanna thought, the words tinged with a bitter sadness. Then she shook her head and lifted her chin to Ben, *"Clancy seems to be in charge of us now, along with Mrs. Crump, our housekeeper. They're okay, but they just don't realize how old I am!"*

Ben repressed a smile and placed the blade of grass tightly between his thumbs. Bringing it to his lips, he blew out a loud squawk.

Rosanna jumped and laughed, then asked him to show her how it was done.

As he coached her, he continued their conversation. *"Rosanna, you're eleven, right? And, from what you've told me, that's a long way to ride a bike. At least you're allowed to be on your own once you get to town. My little sister is your age and I wouldn't want her riding that far."*

Rosanna wrinkled her nose and let the subject pass. Then she asked, *"What's your sister's name?"*

"Meagan - I haven't seen her in over a year. I really miss her a lot."

Rosanna nodded as she again tried to blow past the blade of grass. After a slight tone, she said, *"I miss my mom, too - I can't talk to my dad about her, because he still gets really sad."*

"What did she look like?" Ben asked gently. Sometimes they conversed mentally, but at other times, they seemed to feel the need to talk aloud.

"She had brown hair like me. But she was beautiful. And she always smelled good. Not the perfume, just her. She used to make cookies with me."

Rosanna's voice was so soft, Ben could barely hear her. He started to lean forward to hear her better, then had an idea. Switching to mind-thought, he sent her the message, *"Show me what she looked like."*

Rosanna pulled back a little, her eyes widening. Then she gave a small smile. She closed her eyes and brought up a memory of her mother standing in their kitchen, sliding warm cookies onto a plate.

Ben began to receive a fuzzy picture that slowly came into focus. "She was beautiful," Ben said aloud. "She looked so much like you, Rosanna. She loved you a lot, it's easy to see. And those chocolate chip cookies!"

Her eyes started to fill with tears, but at the same time she felt happy at being able to actually show someone her memories. It was almost like her mother was with her again.

Rosanna carefully put the memory away, and thought to Ben, *"I'd like you to meet my father. Daniel and I have thought of a way that might work."*

Ben looked at her expectantly. *"Okay, tell me."*

"Well, we're going to try to talk him into walking on the beach with us Saturday morning. To look for shells - Daddy likes fossils and all that kind of stuff. Maybe you could be out there too?"

"That sounds like a good idea. What time?"

"I don't know - about eight?"

Rosanna gave him directions to the beach area alongside their home, and after looking at her watch, rushed off to meet Clancy.

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