

The Lighthouse

(Seal Cove, CA – 1969) The air was moist and salty. The sky was blue with cumulus clouds floating slowly from West to East. A lighthouse peered out towards the Pacific Ocean waiting for her nightly shift. Tim lived within walking distance in a small, pale grey Cape Cod home with red shutters. He was the light keeper and resident artist in the sleepy town of Seal Cove.

The lighthouse had a wide bottom with enough room for hostel travelers going to San Francisco. There was a stained, oak plaque, engraved with the name 'Wentworth' in the center of the door. A cowbell with a rope cord was affixed to the left, Tim's doorbell.

A boy and a girl, dressed in baggy clothes, walked up to the cottage and pulled the heavy rope back and forth to ring the bell. "Hello. Is anyone home?"

Tim answered. "Yes, hello. Are you looking for the hostel?"

The girl spoke first. "How much is it for the night?"

"Eight dollars a person each night and that includes breakfast." Tim could tell that even eight dollars might be a lot. "But tonight it's eight dollars for a couple."

The two smiled and reached into their jeans to find the money. The boy pulled out three ones and some change and the girl found a five dollar bill. "Here you go sir" as she handed the wrinkled bills to Tim. "Is there a place to wash up?"

"There's a shower in the house," Tim said pointing behind him. "And there are two bathrooms in the lighthouse. My name is Tim."

"I'm Hannah and this is my boyfriend Eric. We're coming down from Oregon."

"Welcome. Let me show you the lighthouse." The couple followed Tim, holding hands. Tim pulled open the heavy metal door with a creaking sound you would expect, gesturing for them to enter first. The floor was rectangular with a black iron, spiral staircase in the middle. Along the sides were green army cots, at least 10 and more space for people with blankets and sleeping bags. The floor was clean and there were no signs of bugs. "Well, here is where you sleep. On the next landing up, there are two bathrooms and a sink. There's also a small fridge with bottled water."

Eric pointed to the huge windows surrounding them. "There aren't any shades?"

"Sorry" said Tim. "It is a lighthouse" and he gave a little chuckle at his joke.

"Don't worry, folks get pretty tired by dark and sleep soundly. It's the salt air and ocean breeze. Hear that whistling. That's the wind blowing through."

"There's no heat?" said Hannah.

Tim pointed up. "Not regular heat, but when the lamp starts spinning, it radiates heat down here, sort of like sleeping near a campfire. You'll be fine in your bags."

Hannah and Eric put their backpacks and sleeping bags on two of the cots, facing the ocean. "How many people are here tonight?"

“Only two now, but two more have called in to reserve a spot. The two over there are your age, another couple. From Arizona I think. Susan and Jim. Nice kids. They went into town to get something to eat at the diner. You just walk down that street about a half mile and you can’t miss it.”

“Thanks Tim. If it’s OK with you, we’ll use the shower and then go into town.” Eric nodded his agreement.

“Sure enough. Just walk in the back door. There are towels, soap and shampoo. Breakfast is from 7 to 9, bacon, eggs, pancakes and juice. Oh, and coffee and tea of course. You could walk to the diner if you want something more, but you have to pay.”

“I’m sure your breakfast will be fine Tim. Besides we want to get an early start; we’re trying to make the music festival in Berkeley by Saturday.” Eric pointed to his mandolin case and Hannah’s flute.

“Well, isn’t that wonderful. Maybe you’ll play something for me later.”

“We will Tim.” Tim walked back to the house. Eric and Hannah realized how tired they were and collapsed on the cots. They woke up at four, in time for that shower and walk to town for dinner.

As they were walking into town, they saw another couple. “That must be Susan and Jim.” When they met, Hannah introduced herself. “Hi. Are you staying at the lighthouse too?”

Susan spoke first. “Hi, yes, I’m Susan and this is Jim. We’ve been there for a week.”

Jim shook hands with Eric. “Hi, Eric and Hannah.”

Eric was wondering why they had been here so long. “Been here a week, huh?”

“Yeah, we just love it here. The fresh air, the beach and that lighthouse.” Susan gave Jim an affectionate hug. “We have the wildest dreams in there.”

Eric and Hannah looked a little surprised. “Dreams? What do you mean wild?”

Jim and Susan just giggled. “You’ll see,” and they continued walking back to the lighthouse.

Eric and Hannah found a booth at the diner, ordered dinner, then asked the waitress. “You know anything about the lighthouse?”

The waitress smiled. “This is your first night, kids. Well, I wouldn’t want to spoil the surprise” and she walked back to the kitchen.

Eric stopped her. “Wait. Could you bring us some water too?”

The waitress giggled and nodded. “Sure thing hon.”

Hannah rubbed her forehead. “Sounds like an adventure. Wonder why Tim didn’t say anything.”

“Beats me. Maybe the place is haunted.”

“Eric. You don’t believe in ghosts, do you?”

“I don’t know what I believe until I see it. But nobody’s said it was scary, just smiled and laughed about it.”

“Maybe even sensual” as Hannah slid her foot under Eric’s jeans.

“Hmm.”

When Eric and Hannah arrived back at the lighthouse, they saw Jim and Susan sitting outside behind the railing, watching the sun set over the ocean. “Hey guys. You seem to have found the perfect place.”

“This is like heaven. If you watch carefully, you can see seals out in the cove chasing dinner. There’s one now” said Susan as she pointed it out.

“Oh yeah. Cool. Mind if we join you?”

“Not at all. Would you like some wine?”

“Great, thanks.”

Susan poured some sangria into plastic cups and handed them to Eric.

“Thanks Susan. Hey, let me get my music.”

“Bring my flute honey.”

“OK, be right back.”

“A concert on the ocean?”

“No, just a little music to go with the view. Eric and I are renaissance musicians. We’re supposed to play at the Berkeley festival on Saturday.”

“Right on. Hope you get there in time.”

“We have four days. We should be able to hitch there by then.”

“Oh, getting a ride isn’t the problem. We thought we would leave after one night.”

Hannah gave Susan a quizzical look. “The wild dreams?”

“The wildest girl, the wildest.”

Eric returned with the mandolin and handed the flute to Hannah. “OK, any requests from the sixteen hundreds?” and he laughed.

“Fraid not. Just do your thing.”

Hannah began with the flute and Eric joined in. It was a lyrical song, just as you would imagine from 17th century England. "I can almost smell the roasting pig now" Jim said.

"Don't forget the jousting and bow and arrow competitions" said Eric.

"And ladies in corsets tied up to their breasts" said Susan, smiling at them.

"M'lady, I think they are flirting with us," said Eric.

"I think you're right, kind sir," said Hannah.

The four of them talked and played and danced, finishing two bottles of wine. The sun was almost set now and it was getting dark. They could see Tim approaching with a flashlight.

"Time to light the lamp," he said.

Jim and Susan stood and applauded. Eric and Hannah just looked on, perplexed. Tim walked up the spiral staircase and turned on the lamp. Then he set the motor for rotation. A loud whirring sound turned into a low hum as a bright beacon lit up around them.

"OK, time for bed," said Jim.

"But it's only 8:30?" said Hannah.

"You'll see." Jim took Susan's hand and they ran inside giggling.

Tim saw the other couple. "Better get inside. The wind will kick up and blow you right onto those rocks down there. Remember, there's water in the cooler on the second level."

When they got in, they saw Jim and Susan already making out in their sleeping bags, with their clothing tossed out on the wooden floor. Susan started to make sounds of excitement, unabashedly in front of them.

Hannah put her hand to the floor. "Oh, I see why they haven't left. The floor vibrates from the lamp turning."

"Sounds good to me" and he took his clothes off and jumped into the sleeping bag.

Susan saw Eric. "Wait, you don't have your water" as she pointed up the staircase.

"Water. I'm not thirsty."

"You will be hon. Trust me."

"I'll get it Eric." Hannah scurried up the staircase and returned with two bottles of water. By this time, Susan was in her second round of ecstasy.

Hannah gave a bottle to Eric, they clicked the plastic as if they were glass bottles, and then they took a long gulp. "Cheers." She got into the sleeping bag and took off her clothing.

"Hannah. Is the room spinning?"

“No, Eric. That’s the lamp spinning above us. It’s making a shadow spin around the room. Wait. I feel it now too.”

Susan and Jim continued their lovemaking, the empty bottles of water lying beside them. Eric noticed this and said to Hannah. “Have more water.” They both finished their bottle, and then realized what was happening.

“It’s the water,” said Hannah. “I can feel the spinning now and some..ooh..oh...”

“Come here Hannah,” said Eric and they too lost their inhibitions, now oblivious to Susan and Jim. After a couple hours, all four of them fell asleep. That’s when the dreams started.

Susan dreamed of flying on the light beam from the lighthouse toward the moon. She laughed and danced among the clouds.

Jim saw animals in a multi-colored jungle. He stalked around like a leopard, chasing his prey. Then he became the leopard and ate a rabbit.

Eric was back in the 1600s, jousting against an evil giant. Riding at full gallop, he thrust his lance into the giant, who fell to the ground with a large thud.

Hannah, well Hannah had the most exquisite dream of all. She was a princess at a ball, dancing with a handsome man, not a prince, but a commoner. No one else seemed surprised by this and Hannah fell back as her companion dipped her to kiss. Then he picked Hannah up and carried her off.

But all the dreams were interrupted by a loud noise, the heavy door banging. Then they saw a light coming in at their eyes, blinding them. “Who’s there?” said Eric.

“Sorry to wake everyone. It’s just Tim with some latecomers. Everyone, this is Rachel and Dan.”

Everyone exchanged obligatory pleasantries in spite of being woken up out of their dreams of ecstasy.

As Tim turned to leave, Hannah called out. “More water please.”