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The Island

by Emily Junken

The grinding of the ferry's engine is the only noise to interrupt the quiet of the Strait. The tension ebbs away as the ferry slowly slips away from mainland Washington. All of life's problems and stresses stay behind on the dock. I sit staring, unseeing, at the beautiful scenery. Memories from childhood flash through my mind of the ferry ride and the islands.

Memories of waiting at the ferry dock for hours. Catching the red-eye on a cold summer night. Watching the ferry rock violently during a winter storm we were in the middle of. Drinking hot chocolate with five creams to give it taste and eating huge chocolate-chip cookies. Sleeping or playing cards on the deck. Begging my parents to let us go outside on the deck. Watching the ferry dock at Lopez and getting off.

The quiet and peace of the island surround us. A place where time almost stands still and life's pace is slow. The cows and sheep in the pastures. A deer darting across the road. Hundreds of bunnies cover the lawn and eat in the garden. The house my grandparents built on an acre of land with the deck on three sides. The leaning tree that protected the entrance to the trail to the beach. Running down the gently sloping lawn and the steep trail. The playhouse grandfather built for us. The salt-and-pepper rocks that we could sit on. Clams squirting you during walks at low tide. Watching our grandfather and father row out to bring in the crab pot. Boiling the live crabs and picking their meat. Walks down to Spencer Spit on the beach and back by the road. The dinner bell that called us up from the beach. Ice cream from Richardson's and tee-shirts from T-Town. The Orca running at Sharks Reef while the seals play close by.

Life was relaxing and carefree. Now, these are all just memories. Oh, the island is still in the San Juans, the house still stands, and the beach remains, but they are no longer mine. Grandmother moved to be closer to family and now a new family is making memories there.

The ferry grinds to a halt at the Lopez dock. For the first time in my life, I will not get off. My heart and body tell me to move, but my mind keeps my feet rooted to the spot. A sadness overwhelms me and I look away.