

## **More than a Memory**

By Lucy Wimmer

The spine of the album cracks like a dry twig as it opens, releasing a faint cloud of dust, and the scent of old paper. Inside, the heavy black pages are brittle; their edges are rough and torn. Beneath the yellowed plastic sheets, the old photos look trapped, as if they are frozen in time.

The first image is drained of all its original life, faded into a quiet palette of dull grey and bruised blues. A young family of four stand on an unrecognizable coastline; the shoreline a white blur and the ocean behind is just a flat sheet of slate. Their smiles are frozen as the camera captures a precious moment. It shows the windy day as the mother's hair is trapped in a dark swirl across her face. The two children look so small against the big, grey sea. No one remembers what the air felt like, or what they were laughing at. Now, they just look out from beneath a foggy plastic cover.

For a second, the room feels different. A sharp, icy breeze cuts through the air, and suddenly the room has a faint saltwater smell. The quiet walls seem to echo with the faint roar of crashing waves and children's laughter. You blink, shivering with nostalgia, and suddenly the room returns to warm and silent once again. It was just your mind playing tricks.

Slowly and softly, you flick through the pages, your fingertips still tingling from the sudden chill. Over the next few pages, the family grows up. The two small children become teenagers, then adults, and slowly the family portraits become scarce. There are fewer smiles for the camera and more pages empty. You look down at your wrinkled hands and realise how fast time has flown. It felt like yesterday that you were the young mother standing on that windy, slate-grey beach, trying to get the hair out of your face. Now, the house is empty, and your children are out living their own lives. You gently push the heavy album shut, a quiet thud locking away all the memories.