

ON A DUSTY SHELF... BY RACHEL SEIBEL

There was a little chest that sat upon her book case. It looked and smelled of antique wood with two brass bands that encircled and bound the chest closed. It was a pirate chest; a treasure chest. It fit in her hand and yet it contained all the treasures of her world. The memories of her youth, good and bad, all wrapped up in one. There were days on the beach learning how to surf and boogie board; countless days of playing "hookie" from school. There were more days spent on the fishing boat; those were the best ones. Waking up when the sky was still dark and the morning fog had not yet lifted. Hitching the boat to the pickup truck and pulling out of the driveway for a day of unknown adventure. By 5 in the morning they roll into the AM/PM convenience store where they have the build your own hot dog and hamburger station. She picks whatever snacks she wants and piles her goodies on the counter. The drive to the marina is quick and before she knows it the boat is launched and they are heading to the bait barge. Loaded with anchovies and mackerel the fishing can begin on a never-ending horizon of blue. Mysterious monsters of the deep glide by on the surface, so close she could have reached out to touch the things of her nightmares. Those days of new places and wonder would never come again.

Whenever she has guests over they all notice and comment on the tiny chest on her book case. Most days she just smiles and reclaims her treasure from unknowing hands, replacing it amongst the dust and knick-knacks that comprise her life. The chest was her wishing star, advice giver and guardian angel all without ever saying a word. While it only contained the remnants of a mortal life, mere ash, it was still her father and she could still hear his voice.