

## Chapter 9: Our New Home

After another long and tiring journey across country, it was a relief to pull up to their new home, 308 Patrician Drive. Lorene drove the Corolla with Bobby and Bob following close behind in the truck with Chris and Freedom. Several cars were in the drive-way indicating that everyone was there to greet them and welcome them home. They decided to ship the furniture ahead, so they didn't need to spend time setting it up. They were tired and ready to climb into bed, but family time comes first.

"Hey y'all!" Carla said as she, Lynn, Vera, and B.J. walked down the sidewalk to greet them, then the kids came running out into the yard jumping up and down to greet them. Freedom jumped out of the truck to play with the kids.

Everyone hugged and then pitched in to help them with their things.

"Y'all must be so tired," Lynn said as she hugged Lorene. "You made good time," she said, "we weren't expecting you so early."

"Yeah," Carla agreed, "we still had a few things we wanted to get done before you got here, but oh well, we're glad you're here."

Larry, Gary, Kenny, and CD came out next to greet them.

“Now you don’t need to bring in all this stuff yet,” Larry said, “we want you to come in and sit for little bit and rest.”

Everyone piled out and came into the house. Freedom right behind them. Bob asked Chris to let Freedom out back and give her some water in her bowl.

“Oh my gosh!” Lorene exclaimed with surprise as she walked in to see the living room and dining room furniture all put together and in place. She walked over and touched the new vertical blinds, which had already been hung, “these are great! You guys are great! I love it,” and she hugged Carla and Kenny.



“We all pitched in to help,” Kelly said proudly.

“You sure did and great job!” Bob said and thanked her. “Thank you everyone so much!”

“Wait,” Vera said, “you gotta see the kitchen,” and she took Lorene’s hand and walked her to the kitchen as everyone followed from behind. “It’s my favorite.”

“Oh my gosh!” Lorene was totally surprised, “you guys remodeled it already?” she said as she opened the new fridge door and then the oven door.”



“Amazing!” Bob said. “I was going to do all this.”

“Well,” Kenny said, “everyone was so happy to have you all back here, that we decided to pitch in and help you out.”

“Oh,” Lorene remembered, “there’s just one thing missing.”

“What?” Lynn asked.

Lorene ran out to the truck and rummage through the boxes and came back to the kitchen, climbed up on the counter, then put the pig cookie jar back where it belonged. She also put up a picture of her mom and dad.



“And,” Lynn said, “the beds are set up with new sheets and blankets, so you can just climb in when you get tired.”

“Yeah,” Gary said, “just let us know when to leave and we’ll get outta here.”

Lorene, Bob, Chris, and Bobby checked out the rest of the house and there was a surprise in every room.

“I have my own room!” Chris said.

“Me too,” Bobby said.

“Well,” Larry said, “we didn’t know if you wanted that, but you can change it if you want them in the same room.”

“No,” Lorene said, “that’s fine.”

Lorene checked out the bathroom with Gary behind her, “We didn’t do anything to the bathroom,” he said as she looked around, “we figured you guys would want to remodel that however you wanted.”

“Actually,” Lorene said, “I don’t think I’m gonna take out that black and white tile. She ran her hand across the tile on the floor, “it looks the same as when I was a kid, and still looks pretty good.”

“Yeah,” Gary said, “they built houses to last in those days.”

“That’s because they were built by the union,” Larry walked up and chimed in agreement.

“Yeah,” Gary continued, “and you know daddy made sure they built this house to code since he was the supervisor for this housing project.”

“We are just thrilled at what you all have done,” Lorene said with tears welling up in her eyes, then Bob hugged her. “Yeah,” Bob agreed, “this is really an amazing thing you all did for us.”

“Well,” Carla said finally, “we are just so glad that you guys finally came home.”

“You know you guys must now continue the tradition of having the home where everyone comes for family events,” Lynn said and looked around at everyone as they all agreed.

“Of course,” Lorene said, “of course.”

“Ok,” Gary said, “let’s all get out of here and let them get some rest.”

They all said their goodbyes and soon were gone leaving them alone in their new home.

“Mom,” Chris said, “I have the perfect place to hang my board in my room.”

“Yeah,” Bobby said, “and I finally get the top bunk!”

“Ok guys,” dad said, “Let’s just unpack what we need for tonight and leave the other stuff for tomorrow.”

“I’m not even that tired,” Chris said. “Remember, in San Diego it’s only seven o’clock.”

“Well,” mom said, “we’re tired, so you boys find something to do, we’re going to bed.”

“I’m gonna take a shower first,” Bob said.

He opened the linen closet to grab a towel and noticed that the closet was full of towels, wash clothes, sheets, and blankets. "Wow," Bob said out loud to Lorene, "they even have towels and linen here for us."

"Really?" Lorene answered, "I noticed that there are some dishes, cups, and even a coffee pot in the kitchen too. My family's the best, I'm so glad to be home."

Chris and Bobby were unpacking their clothes in their rooms and thought about all their family and friends they left in San Diego. Chris walked into Bobby's room. "What do ya think?" he asked.

"Guess we'll get used to it," Bobby said as he put his empty suitcase in the closet. He climbed up on the top bunk and looked down at Chris. "I finally get the top bunk!" he said again and smiled. Chris smiled too and went back to his room and just laid on his bed and looked up at the ceiling. It was a bit warm, so he opened his window.

*What will it be like here without my friends?* Then he drifted off to sleep.

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"What was that?" Chris woke up from a dead sleep. He heard something growling right outside his open window.

He got up, pulled up a chair to the window and looked outside. It was still dark, but in the moonlight he could see that something was moving in the bushes. He strained his eyes so he could see better, then suddenly a cat exploded from the bushes and took off, then a skunk slipped out from under the bush and slowly walked away. Now he smelled the stench, so he closed his window and tried to go back to sleep, but he couldn't.

He couldn't stop thinking about what he wanted to do first. He remembered his cousin talking about the woods, so that was definitely at the top of his list. His dad said they were on the list at the pool for membership but didn't know how long it would be before they could join. *Virginia Beach was too far.* He remembered seeing some guys playing ball at the school down the street, so he thought that would be a good place to meet new friends. So, that would definitely be the first thing on his list to go check out. Now he was hungry, so he quietly snuck down the hall to the kitchen and made a bowl of cereal. After that, he walked through the utility room to go back to his room and he noticed that the attic stairs were down a bit and it looked like a pale blue light was shining through the crack. He looked up and listened to see if someone or something was up there. He thought he heard something move away from the stairs, but didn't hear anything after that, so he went back to bed, but again, he couldn't sleep. So, he just

laid there until the sun came up, then he heard something in the garage. He looked out the window and saw his dad, so he went out there.

“Morning,” Chris said as his dad was putting stuff up on the rafters.

“You’re up early,” he said.

“Couldn’t sleep,” Chris said, then told his dad about the skunk and the blue light in the attic.

“I’ll check it out later,” dad said, “can you hand me those tarps?”

His dad continued to put stuff in the rafters and Chris helped.

“Wish I’d kept that riding lawnmower,” Bob said as they worked together.

“Is that the same one grandpa used to ride us around on when we were little?” Chris asked.

“That’s the one,” he said, “it looked in pretty good condition. If I’d known then we were going to buy the house, I may not have let that go, the grass is already getting too high. I forgot how much it rains here. Guess I’ll have to invest in one.”

“Ok if I go down to the school later?” Chris asked.

“Sure,” dad said, “but check with your mom first.”

“Ok,” Chris said then decided to take a walk around the yard to check things out.

As he walked out of the garage, he saw that his dad had installed the can crusher next to the workbench, *cool*, he thought.

Grandpa’s birdbath in the yard. He remembered when he was a kid how much grandpa liked feeding the birds. He remembered the umbrella with all the bird feeders grandpa had made.

He walked around the back of the garage and noticed something he didn’t remember seeing before. It looked like a couch frame or something made out of pipes. He had no idea what that was, then he saw something shiny sticking out from under the pipe-like thing. He picked it up it and looked at it, it looked like a dog tag. He looked a little closer and could read something on it. It said “Pete” and something else that appeared to be warn off.

He looked up and saw his mom at the kitchen window, so he walked back towards the house.

“Morning sweetie,” mom said as Chris walked over to her, “what ya got there?”

“I found this behind the garage,” and he handed it to her. “It says ‘Pete’”.

“What?” mom said in surprise, then sat down at the table to get a better look, then clutched it to her chest and looked like she was far off.

“What is it?” Chris asked.

“Our dog was named Pete,” she said looking down at it. “Do you realize how long this tag has been out there?” she said thinking out loud, “Let’s see, it’s been at least 15 years or more since he died.”

“Oh is that the dog you told us about that loved to jump the Hilton’s fence?” Chris remembered the story.

“Yes,” she said, “and he loved the snow too.” She clutched the tag closer, then looked at it again, “he was such a good dog. Where did you say you found it?”

“Underneath that couch-looking thing behind the garage,” he told her.

“What couch-looking thing?” she said, “I thought we got rid of everything,” she got up and walked out the door and Chris followed close behind.

When she saw what Chris was talking about, she couldn't believe it. "Bob," she yelled for him to come back there. "You won't believe what's back here."

"What's wrong?" he asked not wanting to be disturbed.

"Just come here and look," she said finally.

"Ok, what,?" Bob said as he walked back to where they were.

"That's the bike rack daddy made when I was a kid," she said and walked over it to check it out. "It doesn't even look that old," she noted.

Bob got a little closer to check it out, "that's because it looks like he welded a bunch of stainless steel pipes together," he tried to lift it, but it was too heavy.

"I remember when daddy made that," she thought back. "I watched him welding this thing together and asked him what it was, but he didn't tell me," she continued, "then when he was done, he put it in the yard and told me to go get my bike and then I knew it was a bike rack."

"A bike rack?" Chris asked.

"Yeah," Lorene said, "and now we're gonna use it for you kids' bikes," she said, "so, go get your bike."

They pulled the heavy bike rack out into the yard and Chris came riding up to it with his bike.

“Now set it right there,” she pointed to a spot on the rack.

Chris rolled the front tire onto the rack in between the pipes, and the bike stood up straight. “Hey,” Chris said, “I don’t even need to use the kickstand! Cool.”

“I remembered later when we all grew up and had cars, he used it for the trash cans,” mom said, “Of course, that was when they had metal trash cans.”

Bobby came out in his pajamas to see why everyone was outside so early in the morning. “What’s that?” Bobby asked.

“It’s a bike rack!” Chris said, “can’t you tell? Grandpa made it when mom was little.”

Bobby not too impressed, went back in the house to make some cereal.

“Look at this honey,” Lorene showed Bob the dog tag, “Chris found this under the bike rack,” she said, “see look it still says ‘Pete’,” and she showed it to him.

“What?” Bob said, “that’s strange that it would be out here for so long without anyone noticing it.”

“Well,” she suggested, “daddy buried Pete and Buffy right here under this hill we’re standing on.” Said looking down, “and that bike rack has probably been back here for just as long.”

“Interesting,” Bob said and walked back into the garage to continue his work.

Lorene followed him, “I know you’re excited about having a garage,” she said while he went back to putting stuff up in the rafters. She looked around the garage, “remember all the stuff daddy had in here?”

“Yep,” he said while he worked, “it took him a lifetime to save all that stuff.”

“So,” she said as she walked back out towards the house, “now you have a lifetime to fill it back up with your stuff.”

“I plan on it!” he said as she walked away, and she smiled still clutching the dog tag. She put it next to the sink to finish the dishes, then went to the restroom.

While she was away, the dog tag began moving away from the sink, flipped up into the air, then fell onto the floor.

She came back still thinking about the dog tag. She noticed that it was gone. Bobby walked in, “did you see Pete’s dog tag?”

“No,” Bobby said, then looked down and saw it on the floor, “here it is,” and he picked it up and handed it to her, then walked back out.

Lorene stood there looking at the dog tag with a strange look on her face thinking, *I know I put this on the sink.*” But then she just brushed it off.

