



The Story of Us

Teri Wilson

They walked the rest of the way to Jamie's house in companionable silence. It had been a while since she'd spent time with someone without feeling the need to fill the quiet moments with chatter. She'd forgotten how nice it felt to simply walk together and just *be*.

It wasn't until she paused at the walkway in front of her Cape Cod-style cottage that Sawyer seemed to realize they'd reached their destination. The rain had stopped, so he snapped the umbrella closed and finally took in the sight of the gabled roof and white picket fence.

For a second, she wondered if he'd recognize it.

Then his face broke into a broad smile. Of course he did. "You live at your parents' house?"

She nodded. "Yep. I bought it six months ago,

right before they left on their big retirement trip across the continent.”

They strolled toward the porch as Sawyer’s gaze roamed over the house and his smile turned wistful. “Oh, yeah. They always talked about wanting to do that.”

“Yep, and they did it. I just couldn’t stand the thought of letting this place go.”

“I’m glad you didn’t.” He gave their umbrella a gentle shake and water droplets flew, nourishing the pots of red begonias lining the curved walkway. “I always loved this place. Whenever I think about having a home of my own, it looks like this.”

“You don’t have a house?” Jamie tucked a lock of hair behind her ear to get a better look at him. She couldn’t imagine grown-up Sawyer without a home of his own. He’d dreamed about buying a house for as long as she’d known him—an old, historical building that he could restore and maintain. A house with “stories in its bones,” as he used to say.

“Condo, but I’m not there that much,” he said.

They climbed the broad steps that lead to Jamie’s front door, and the expression on Sawyer’s face was so familiar that Jamie felt like she was remembering a moment they hadn’t yet lived. “I thought a big house was something you always wanted.”

Sawyer lingered on the threshold. “Part of being freelance means having to take jobs all over

the country, wherever they are. One of the draws to Ridley is a chance to stay in one place.”

Oh, right. Ridley.

For a while there, she'd forgotten all about the development company. Such a notion would have seemed impossible a few days ago.

But here...now...standing in the very spot where Sawyer had kissed her goodnight countless times before, the proposed Ridley project seemed a million miles away.

His thoughts seemed to be tracking with hers. “How many times have I walked you to this door?” he asked in a voice as soft and tender as a memory.

Then his gaze locked onto hers, and as much as Jamie knew she should look away, she just couldn't. The lines around his eyes were new, as were the sharp angles of his jawline, but those warm brown irises of his were exactly the same. These were the eyes that had seen her at a time when no one else had. She'd been nothing but a quiet, book-loving dreamer, and he'd brought her out of her shell and shown her that the world could be every bit as colorful and vibrant in reality as it was in the novels she loved so much.

Meeting Sawyer O'Dell had changed her. He'd helped her become the woman she was today, because she'd loved the person he'd seen when he'd looked at her with those eyes—interesting, enchanting.

His.

What would it be like to feel that way again? To be loved and cherished by the only person she'd ever truly wanted to build a life with? To have her heart put back together by the man who'd broken it when he'd been just a boy?

The thought was intoxicating. It made her do things she knew she shouldn't—like step closer to him so that their breath mingled together in the evergreen air, causing her to smile to herself as his gaze drifted slowly, purposefully to her lips. Her breath hitched as he dipped his head. She'd never wanted a kiss so badly in her life—not even when she'd been sixteen years old and he'd bent toward her in the exact same way for the very first time.

His hand was on her waist and his lips were just a whisper away—a heartbeat, a breath, a memory. And Jamie's heart felt as if it were opening like a favorite book, one whose pages hadn't been read in a long, long time. She let her eyes drift closed, because she knew this story by heart. The story of Sawyer and Jamie...

The story of us.

But in the sliver of a second before their lips met, someone said Jamie's name, and the book slammed shut.

“Jamie?”

Her eyes flew open. She and Sawyer blinked at each other, as if they couldn't quite get their bearings. Then they both turned their heads in the direction of the speaker.

No. Jamie's stomach tied itself into a knot. It couldn't be him. What on earth was he doing there?

She bit her bottom lip, still tingling from the missed opportunity. She'd been waiting fifteen years to kiss Sawyer O'Dell again, and apparently, she'd have to wait even longer.

"Matt?"