

AMANDA DYKES

*whose
waves*

these are

A novel

A glowing lantern sits on a dark, textured rock in the foreground. The lantern's light is warm and yellow, contrasting with the cool blue tones of the background. The background is a blurred view of a coastline at night, with lights from buildings and streetlights creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is serene and evocative.

“An absolute gem of a debut! With her breathtaking prose and captivating setting, Amanda Dykes weaves a tale of utter charm along the rugged coast of Maine. *Whose Waves These Are* transcends to the highest level of fiction. The author has paused to see humanity at its most real and precious, leaving the reader to tuck this one among the classics. It’s a novel that wraps around the heart, breathing of hope and light in every scene. Equal parts relevant and nostalgic, this is a novel for the ages.”

—Joanne Bischof, Christy and Carol Award–winning author of
Sons of Blackbird Mountain

“This is the book everyone will talk about all year—lyrical, lovely, full of heart and heartache, secrets kept and revealed. These characters, this town, and their stories will seep into your soul and leave you wanting more. A novel of hope and reconciliation you won’t forget for a long time, probably not forever.”

—Sarah Sundin, bestselling and award-winning author of
The Sea Before Us and *The Sky Above Us*

“A lovingly woven tale. Climb into these pages and be buoyed by this story’s journey, alternately rocked and lulled by its waves. Full of heart and poetry, Amanda Dykes proves why she is such a beloved voice in lyrical fiction.”

—Jocelyn Green, award-winning author of *Between Two Shores*

“With a gorgeously inimitable voice, Dykes sets herself apart with a debut novel as timeless as its themes of redemption and everlasting love. I dare you not to be swept into a yarn of age-old tales and seaside secrets deftly penned by a lyrical pen that pliantly shifts between contemporary and historical frames. Romantic, spellbinding, and wonderfully unique, Dykes’s sense of setting and emotional resonance is nearly unparalleled. A book world to be savored and returned to again and again.”

—Rachel McMillan, author of *Murder in the City of Liberty*

“When an author can capture me in the early words of a story, hold my attention on every page, and make me care this deeply about the characters and their struggles, the author has proven her skill as a storyteller. Amanda Dykes does all that, but with lyrical language that textures the experience and illustrates the power of well-placed words and their effect on the soul. I’ll not forget *Whose Waves These Are*. Beautifully done.”

—Cynthia Ruchti, award-winning author of more than two dozen hemmed-in-Hope books

“Amanda Dykes’s voice is as powerful as the waves and as deep as the ocean in *Whose Waves These Are*. Readers will love the thoughtful imagery and poetic language without losing sight of a well-crafted plot that will offer courage and hope in the face of the storms of life.”

—Elizabeth Byler Younts, author of *The Solace of Water*

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To Dad and Mom,
who have always shone light
in the darkness.



Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
from “The Day Is Done”



“He who . . . changes deep darkness into morning . . .
who calls for the waters of the sea
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
The Lord is His name.”

Amos 9:6

prologue

“Every wave in that big old blue sea is a story.”

Bob told me this a long time ago, his voice brined with wind and water.

I laughed and focused on the cresting peaks from his old dock. They disappeared faster than a ten-year-old could count.

“Too many waves,” I said. “It can’t be.”

His smile pushed wrinkles around blue eyes as he squeezed my hand tight.

“So many waves, Annie. You remember that.”

It would be decades before I’d learn the truth of that. So many stories. In this pocket of a harbor where broken lives, like waves upon the shore, are gathered up and held close. I never imagined then that it would be my breaking place, too.

Nor how beautiful the breaking could be.

one

ANSEL-BY-THE-SEA, MAINE
SEPTEMBER 1944

One minute a guy is splitting wood in the northeastern corner of the country, stomach rumbling and heart afire with ambition in the wake of his eighteenth birthday, and the next minute he's pumping water from the old kitchen sink to clean the work off his hands and pick up a letter from the president of the United States of America himself. It lies there on the red, paint-chipped kitchen table, like an old friend who has let himself in and put his feet up, the most natural thing in the world.

But it's anything but natural.

Somewhere in transit on the postman's boat ride across the bay, the letter has taken on some drops of water. The mail usually does in Ansel-by-the-Sea, and the postman doubles as a sleuth, delivering letters with partial addresses with infallible accuracy. This time the name is blurred, only *Bliss* and the house name legible. Usually just a name suffices, or if one was being very formal, the house's name. Sailor's Rest.

Robert Bliss rips it open, grips it too hard.

ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION

His pulse pounds in his ears. This is it. Almost exactly four years now, he's waited for this day. Ever since he'd gathered along with the rest of the town to watch President Roosevelt announce the first number of the draft. They'd watched on the town's only television, over at the Bait, Tackle, and Books shop, craning to see the capsules filling a towering glass bowl on the screen. Tiny white papers, each inscribed with a number and rolled up tight. A man had lifted a wooden spoon—hewn from the very marrow of the room where the Declaration of Independence was signed long ago—and stirred. Slow and sacred, moving the numbers until they were as mixed up as the war-torn world outside their country. Even through the television's grainy image, Robert could feel the thick gravity of the moment in that room of Washington men, electric with awareness that these numbers . . . they were people. Families. Lives about to be turned upside down by this thing called the draft.

Four years later the electricity pulses through Robert still, assurance that this is what he was made for. *For such a time as this.*

He holds the letter a moment longer, feeling a thousand nights of prayers gathered up in it. Answered here. That finally, at eighteen, he could go. Finally—though they'd closed enlistment “to protect the home-front workforce” and he couldn't just sign up—the draft is calling him to rise and fight. Protect. The only thing he has ever been good at.

He runs a thumb over the crookedly stamped return address in the upper-left corner—the local draft board.

The President of the United States,

Not yet ready to read the salutation, Robert skims down to the bold word GREETING in all capitals.

Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service therein.

Selected. Training. Service. Robert's breath comes quick at those words.

You will, therefore, report to the local board named above at

The next words are hand-typed in.

Machias Railroad Station at 7:15 A.M., on the 17th day of October, 1944.

He scans the rest and then closes his eyes. Swallows. There's one line yet to read, and a part of him doesn't want to read it. It'll be his name. It has to be. Still, a knot twists in his stomach at the knowledge that there is one other soul in this family whose name might appear there instead.

The clock ticks into the silence as Germany rains fire over Britain across the ocean. And he returns to the top of the letter.

To—

The screen door slams, jolting Robert. Instinct closes the letter, tucks it behind his back. It's his brother, Roy, giving him a mouth-shut grin as he chews, a half-gone apple in his hand. He is Robert's twin in every way but two: Roy came two minutes earlier into the world, and Roy now wears a simple band on his left ring finger. One that, try as Robert might to stop it, still sears something awful into him every time he sees it.

"Come on," Roy says. "We're going for a clam dig."

Robert folds the letter slowly, hoping not to draw attention to it. "We?"

"You. Me. Jenny. And . . ." Roy takes a breath, his shoulders wide. There's something of the little kid in him, some untold excitement. "Someone else, too. You'll see when we get there. Let's go."

Robert nods, slides the letter into his back pocket. He's been avoiding these outings with the newlyweds, but the letter drives him, wanting to get Roy as far from it as he can. But Roy's grin freezes. He's spotted the empty envelope on the table.

Two lanky strides and he's spun the envelope still on the table to read its nameless text. Sees, no doubt, that it's from the War Department.

Heaviness rolls through the room like a tide. They both know there are only two people it could be for, and they're standing face-to-face.

Robert's jaw locks.

Roy gestures to Robert's pocket. "Is that the letter?"

It's like lifting lead, but Robert pulls it out.

Roy snatches it, unfolds it, reads it from the beginning—and his face goes white.

Robert's heart lands in his stomach. He can't see the letter, but he can read his brother's face. And it's not the answer Robert hoped for.

The screen door creaks open but doesn't slam this time. That would be Jenny, the gentle closing of the door so like her. A month and a half a wife and, as their mom liked to say, she had the glow of a bride.

"*Poor as church mice and rich as kings,*" Jenny had said when Roy showed her the wedding bands. He'd carved them from the wood of an old-growth tree Dad and Mom had found on the mountain many years ago.

Robert's gaze settles on Jenny as she approaches behind her husband, wood-and-wire clam hod in hand. Cheeks touched with the chilly wind, she looks brighter than ever—with a quiet beauty that can take a man's breath right out of him. Robert looks at the floor.

"Did you tell him?" She slips her hand into Roy's. Robert forces himself to look. This is how he needs to see her. Together with Roy. He must look, so his heart will see, so his soul will follow. She's Roy's now, Roy's forever.

"I . . ." Roy looks at her as if there's a whole ocean between

them. She squeezes his hand and chatters on, her melodic voice at an excited tempo, weaving through the silent currents the letter has brought.

“Well,” she says, “your mother was thrilled. You should have seen her, Roy.” She laughs, and it’s music. “She jumped right in the Ford and took off for Machias to see Mrs. Laughlin about some yarn. She says she has to get started knitting a blanket . . .” She talks on, her hand falling to her stomach. The leaden weight inside Robert grows. He looks from Jenny, to Roy, to the letter. And back at Roy. *A baby*. And Roy standing there with a letter that may as well be from the grim reaper.

His brother locks his stare with Robert’s. Everything fades away, and they’re ten years old again, looking out over the ocean as a storm bigger than their whole universe approaches and Dad motors off to town to fetch Mom home before it hits. “*Stick together, boys*,” he hollers, and disappears around their island. “*Keep inside away from the storm, and don’t let each other out of your sight.*” Robert had failed then. He could not fail now.

Jenny has stopped talking, the flush on her face fading as her smile does, too. “What is it?” she asks, watching this unspoken knowing go on between the brothers.

Roy shakes his head. “Nothing. I’ll tell you later.” He grasps for—and finds—a smile, pulls Jenny close until her head is leaning on his shoulder.

And just as they’ve done a thousand times since their youth, the three of them walk down to the clam flats by Milton Farm and dig up a bounty. Jenny swinging the basket, Roy hauling a clam rake and grinning at her as if she’s gold itself, and Robert’s chest yawning into a cavern over this injustice.

“What’s got you all tongue-tied?” Jenny’s sprinkling of freckles over her petite nose drives the stake deeper in him. But for her . . . even now, he tries to muster some semblance of a smile. It feels so mangled and forced on his face, he probably looks like a bloated puffer fish. She laughs, all silvery, and some of the edge falls away inside him.

He knows, despite everything—looking at her and looking at his brother, who wouldn't hurt a fly—he would do anything for them.

“You two meeting up tonight?” Jenny looks between them, entwining her fingers with Roy's. “For your birthday tradition. I didn't hear you mention it, so I wasn't sure . . .”

Roy looks at Jenny, drinking her in, knowing what she doesn't know yet. That any time spent away from her now is time that cannot be reclaimed in this ticking clock of a draft. Any time spent on the island of their boyhood, resurrecting their juvenile midnight-birthday traditions, is priceless time away from his bride.

“I was thinking we'd maybe skip it this year,” Roy says. He looks at Robert, and the message is clear: *Please understand.*

He understands more in this moment than he ever has and prays Roy won't hate him for this. For there is only one thing that can make this right.

“No,” Robert says. He flinches at how abrupt it sounds, sticking his foot in his mouth like always, fumbling with words. “I mean—let's meet up.” He pastes that puffer-fish grin back on his face. “Please? For old times' sake. Just one last time.”

Those words hit Roy harder than Robert intended. Too much silence passes, and Jenny looks quizzically between them. “Go ahead,” she says, laying an arm gently over her slim stomach once more. “Who knows how many more times you'll be able to do this?”

The question, meant in kindness, socks Robert hard. If all goes well tonight, Roy's days with Jenny will never end.