

# THE MOSAIC MERMAID

*By Diana Baxter*



When a time capsule is unearthed before its intended opening date, it presents a unique parallel between the past and the present. The contents represent a snapshot of a moment in time. It can stir emotions, from astonishment and curiosity to a profound sense of connection.

The finder is put into the role not just of a discoverer, but also a guardian. Presented with a choice, they can preserve the capsule and its contents or unveil its secrets. It is not to be taken lightly, as it involves weighing the original intent of the capsule's creators and the consequences of unearthing it.

*Six pages of 11. Enjoy!*



*2016 - October Rain*

“Mrs. Rosewood!” A gravelly voice shouted as he slapped his hand on the back window of her SUV. “Mrs. Rosewood, stop!”

As she glanced in the side-view mirror, she spotted her contractor. Rivulets of mud and bits of foliage ran down his yellow rain slicker. His rubber boots, caked in mud, slid in the wet leaves as he reached the driver’s side door.

Dana’s Range Rover’s windshield wipers worked overtime, snatching stray leaves and sleet. The deteriorating weather in the Berkshires of Massachusetts alarmed her. She knew it was time to make her way back to New York City.

Dana squinted as she cracked the window and looked up. “Thomas, for heaven’s sake, you scared me. Is everything okay?”

In the raw air, puffs of vapor escaped Thomas with every winded word as his worried eyes narrowed. “Ah–no, Mrs. Rosewood, we, ah, we found something over there, down on your property. You need to look. We need to stop digging.” Keeping his head tucked under

his hood, he pointed down the muddy slope as pings of sleet pelted his rain slicker.

Dana looked down at the muddy trail and over to her digital clock on the dashboard. She turned her attention back to the husky man, narrowing her eyes in obvious irritation. What could be of such importance? She had just been down there. She feared driving over the rickety wooden bridge again, fearing it would lead her straight into the boulder ridden brook.

“I’ll see it next time, and I need to get back to the city. This weather here is not getting any better. Pack up and stop for the day and send your crew home.” Seeing the look on his face, she added, “I’ll pay them a full day’s wages.” Dana Squinted as stray pelts of sleet from the open window found her face.

Thomas looked down the muddy dirt road toward the clearing where Dana's new and magnificent country home was being built atop the serene Berkshires mountains. Grandiose, Thomas called it.

“Ma’am, I think you better come down and see what we’ve found. Drive on up onto the paved road,” he insisted as he looked up the muddy road and back to Dana. “Park up there, and I’ll come around and pick you up in my truck.” Soggy leaves met his raincoat as the wind picked up. “Park on the grass, on the right side. You’ll be safe there.”

“Can’t my husband deal with this? I’ll call him now.” She reached into her purse.

Thomas nodded his head in disagreement. “No, I uh, suggest you take-a-look-see at this yourself.”

Dana shot one last glance at the clock. She struggled with the thought of leaving the comfort of the Range Rover’s heated seats.

“We ah—may need to move the foundation.”

“Seriously? I’ll park up on the road and we need to make this quick.” Dana closed the window, wondering what could be wrong. She was just down at the lot, and nothing was out of place.

With a quick gesture, Thomas turned and, with caution, made his way down the slick hill. As if a tortoise, he tucked his head inside his

rain slicker, feeling a mixture of anticipation and curiosity as he hopped into his old red Ford pickup.

Dana shifted the SUV into drive, and, with a few disturbing slips, the SUV fought for traction as it started the slow climb. Once parked, she texted her husband, Stephen, telling him she would be home late.

Petite Dana Rosewood, in her mid-fifties, once a New York City TV news anchor and morning host, had a prying mind. The semi-retired high-powered journalist traveled the world as was ready to dig into was her new life journey, living in the Berkshires, blogging about gardening and life in the country. Still in a hurry, she was not pleased to have to head back down to her lot. Pushing up the hood of her raincoat and slipping her hands into her Fratelli Orsini gloves, she let out an exaggerated sigh. She looked at her phone one last time, then stepped out of her SUV. Her boots hit the wet pavement as she waited for Thomas.

Dana looked up at a flock of cackling birds that landed on a telephone line. A gust of wind forced the birds to fly elsewhere. In the distance, she could hear Thomas's truck's rumbling echoes as it struggled up the muddy hill and drove onto the pavement. The bent and rusty left bumper of his dilapidated work truck alarmed her. Was this safe? Climbing in with a hint of a smile, she made sure to avoid the torn seat fabric showing the springs. The door squealed as she shut it. After settling in, she pushed her raincoat hood back and adjusted her fringed bangs. The potent smell of gasoline, wet dogs, and cigarettes overwhelmed her. Removing her warming gloves, she tucked them away in her pockets.

Thomas noticed Dana's discomfort, and with a grin, he slapped the dashboard. "Ole Betty here is a 1959 Ford and once belonged to my uncle Bart. The old gal is my workhorse now. She ain't nothing fancy, but she gets the job done."

"I can see that. As long as Betty can get us to my lot and back, I'm fine with her." Dana forced adjusted her rain slicker in the frigid truck. "The weather up here certainly has its moods. Just last week, the

sun was out, the leaves were in full autumn color wash and the air was balmy.”

“Yeah, just wait ‘til winter blows in. And uh, sorry, the heater’s busted. My buddy was gonna fix her, but he ain’t around this week.” Thomas gave a broad smile as he shifted the truck into drive. With a jerk forward and grind of the tired gears, they began the descent to Dana’s building lot. He took the last drag off his cigarette and turned to Dana, “Mrs. Rosewood, how did you find out about this land?” he flicked the remains of the cigarette out the window.

“It was a lovely day last summer when we stayed up at a romantic inn nearby. We took a lazy drive and saw the for-sale sign. It was beautiful — the white birch trees stood out against the mossy boulders. The wild daisies swayed on the side of the road; the crisp bouquet of crab apples was in the air. Gosh, I was in love. I rephrase that, we were in love.” She bumped forward and back as he turned the truck around and shifted gears as they headed further down the steep road.

He lit another cigarette. “I live not too far from these parts. This land sat still for a long time. It has a—oh—oh shit on a shingle, damn it! Hold on tight, Mrs. Rosewood, hold on!”

The truck careened and skidded sideways, perilously close to the tree-lined embankment by the wooden cross bridge. Below lay a rocky gully that passed for a brook when swollen by the recent heavy rains. With the sharp turns of his steering wheel and the shrilling grinds of the gears, he regained control and got the truck over the bridge. It swung forward as the wipers stirred splatters of mud and fallen leaves on the windshield, obscuring the view. Wrestling with the gears, he heard a loud whine from under the hood as a large branch struck the bed of the truck.

“Whew — Gray clay is the worst and slick as ice when wet. Are you all right, Mrs. Rosewood?” He glanced over, noticing her hands braced on the dashboard.

“Yes, yes, I’m just fine.” Her heart was on the verge of bursting out of her chest when she sat back with instant regret as a spring jabbed her mid-back. “Ouch.” She wiggled forward.

He shifted his attention to Dana. “Sorry about that spring. I see you got yourself some white knuckles.”

She turned to Thomas. “Ah, you dropped your cigarette.”

He stomped it out and with his visibility about gone; he stuck his head out the window. “The windshield fluid box is busted.”

*She couldn't help but wonder about the other broken parts in this dilapidated truck.*

She continued with their conversation. “As you were saying about my land, Thomas?”

“Oh, nothing but if ya want to know,” Thomas popped his head back in, straining to see through the windshield, he mumbled something under his breath.

“Do tell.”

“Just ah—it is a magnificent piece of property with those views of the Berkshires and the brook that runs alongside it. They call that brook, *walk with the spirit.*”

“Who are they?” Dana wiggled as a seat spring poked her rear end for the second time.

“The old folks. This was once Mahican Indian land, about the mid-1600s to mid-1800s. Alongside the brook is where they settled to hunt and fish in the summer. *The Great Spirit* led them to the water. Its flow guided them to food and shelter.”

“Sounds like old Native American folklore.”

“Maybe so, but they claim to have great power over the land. Waunthut Mennitow is a divine spirit with no human form or attributes and was there to guide them. Destructive little beings you don’t want to mess with!” He chuckled to himself as he turned to Dana. “Yup, that sacred land is what you got yourself. Or so the locals believe.”