

The Waves

They say life is a beach. She thinks about the waves.

She watches as they roll and swell and wash over the shore, sweeping out from under them the sand in their path. Elaborate castles are crushed in their wake, reduced to the meaningless grains they were before. The waves are never ending. Every day they are the same. She waits for respite, for some pause in their incessant rhythm. But there is none. In and out, in and out. The beach is designed and erased, designed and erased yet again. Always back to nothing. Always left flat when the tide creeps in.

She rests her bike against the same old tree and ventures nearer. The winds are strong today. They rustle the water and leave great ripples on the surface of its depths. Her hair whips mercilessly about her eyes and she struggles to maintain her vision. The beach extends farther than her sight can reach. It is only a speck in the distance where it ends, a tiny yellow dot surrounded by a splash of blue. The eternal ocean's blue which won her heart so long ago. She wonders why she continues to return, but there is a place within where she understands.

Now the sun is hot. But hot is too weak a word to describe the blistering toll it takes on those underneath. Most retreat to the shade to fan themselves lazily under the arc of tall trees. She walks on. Sometimes moving is better than staying still. In fact, this is often the case. Or at least she has found so. The sand is hard and smooth underfoot and a wave laps gently over her toes, a warning of what is to come.

When night unfolds, a blanket of black replacing the once brilliant blue, the beach thins, the way it always does. The waves become ominous now; the sense of their power is chilling. They grow and foam at the mouth before snatching those weak enough to remain in their destined direction. She kneels a safe distance from the waves and works. She writes. She *carves*. There are words that she wants the world to know, things she yearns to have. She traces in the sand, then stops to stare.

She turns from the beach and returns, rides through the darkness and cold night air, to the place where she came from, to the hard little bed and walls just as cold as the darkness. Will the night ever end? She ponders the question even after day has dawned.

Today the waves are small. She eyes them with disappointment. The children are not disappointed. They play and laugh undeterred and she longs for what was lost. There is something she is missing. There are many things. How can one recover what was lost? The beach is clear and flat, but the children create anew.

They fade with the darkness. Fingers fill with sand as another word is etched on its surface. She glances at the sky as she finishes for a glimpse of the starry horizon that echoes in the water. Somehow then it's possible. Somehow then there's someday.

She turns from the beach and returns, rides through the darkness and the cold night air, to the stairs filled with shadows and doors that are shut. She dreams as she sleeps and she smiles. But the dream is over, snatched away while feelings linger in the air, waves of warmth that contradict the bare, bleak morning. She rushes to open the curtains. Rain pours down, beating against the roof like a drum.

The beach is still beautiful. It is empty. But she doesn't mind. Droplets form tiny holes across the water and the sand and her hair is plastered to her face and neck before she is very far across the shore. This time it is useless to write but she has always known it was a pointless exercise. Her motives run much deeper, hidden like treasures at last that can't be taken. She is alone. She kneels and her jeans become sticky with sand.

She turns from the beach and returns, rides despite the slickness of the slippery roads and reaches the grim, brick exterior. She enters and ascends and opens one door only. She sleeps and wakes, the same old tired cycle.

Clouds. White and puffy, just the way they're meant to be. Laughter rings across the breeze, happiness restored. But she cannot share. She cannot cross into their world. She merely watches, smiles wistfully from afar. She feels and then she dreams but before the morning comes, the slate is smoothed and all is washed away.

Night comes quickly. She kneels and stops to think. She writes the things she wants, the things she cannot have. Perhaps for once she'll win. Perhaps she will at last. She stands and stares.

The trees offer quick relief. She'll think for a while. Sleep precedes action, flashing too fast to decipher. When her eyes flutter open, the sun is high. The night returns slowly, if only in her mind. She ventures to the shore.

Something is different. Her eyes widen. The sand is neither flat nor clear. The words remain but carry on. There is more. There is *more*. There is someone else who sees. The words are small but they are powerful, as powerful as a wave pulled into sea. They stir something in the place where understanding grows, in the place untouched by life so cold. They are so small but they are everything she wants.

Her eyes linger on the message but only for a moment. The trees sway, the skies are pure.

She turns from the beach and goes home.