

"Just go to the beach..."

Summer Break! In my opinion, one of the happiest times of the year. Sure, sometimes I have work or camps, but summer was free of stress, free of worries, and full of joy. Yet there was one thing that summer for me, one classic summer staple that led to fear and the return of dark memories. And that was going to the beach.

The beach and I have a long complicated history that spans through twelve years of my life. When I was little, the beach held my fondest memories, jumping over the waves in my dad's strong arms. Yet as I got older, things began to change. The beach was where I broke my wrist, where all my friends ditched me, where I started choking on salt water and had to be carried back to shore. It's safe to say that when I hear the beach, the joy of summer is instantly replaced with terror, fear, and embarrassment.

"Aria, get out of bed," my mom screamed at me, "it's like two pm already, I think you've slept enough."

"What?" I replied, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes, "I'm tired."

"Your brother's friends invited him to the beach."

"So?" I asked, "Why does that concern me?"

"I'm thinking of making it a family outing. C'mon it'll be good to get a little fresh air."

You couldn't have woken me up faster with a bucket of cold water, "The beach? No, no, mom we talked about this, I do not go to the beach."

"Talked about what? Anyways, you get changed, we have to leave in fifteen minutes" She replied cluelessly scurrying out of the room.

"Mom, I'm almost thirteen, can't I just stay home alone," I begged as she walked through the door.

But my mom was determined, once she made up her mind and there was no changing it. And, I knew it, we all knew it. What was I even going to do at a beach with a bunch of crazy nine year olds? I don't know what family outing my mom was talking about, but we just had to go with it. I quickly slipped on my bathing suit before running to brush my teeth and before I knew it, we were off.

After what seemed like a lifetime we finally made it, and my brother hurried off with his friends. I was planning on laying a towel down, and just playing on my phone the entire time, until I remembered. My mom had taken my phone just yesterday, for the entire week. How on earth was I supposed to survive today?

My mom, aware of my dilemma, told me that she had made a scavenger hunt for me to keep me busy.

Really mom, a scavenger hunt? That was her big idea. I was so done but I had no other choice, it was either that or go play with my brother. I was handed the first clue, and I sulked around the beach, grabbing clue after clue. My guess was that this scavenger hunt had originally been designed for my brother and his friends because some of the clues were so outrageously simple. I mean one of them was literally, "I keep you dry after you go in the water."

I was so done by the time I reached the last clue, and I was hoping that at least, for all my suffering, I would get a decent prize. Maybe even my phone back. I approached the tower

the prize should have been hidden in. Yet as I reached to grab it, it wasn't my phone, it wasn't candy, it wasn't even a book, it was a flip phone. What did my mom think she was doing, giving me a literal flip phone?

At that point, I just gave up and started walking back towards my towel. I tried to make my face look as angry as possible but as much as I hated to admit it, however stupid and silly the scavenger hunt was, it actually did a pretty good job of making time pass, especially on the beach. I layed down on my towel exhausted from running around the beach and quickly passed out.

Suddenly, I was jolted back into reality when my little brother started screaming in my face, "It's time to go!"

I had no memory of even falling asleep. What was happening? I never fall asleep easily. It takes me hours every night to go to sleep and every time I do, I wake up in the morning twenty times more exhausted than when I fell asleep. But now, I felt refreshed, and when I tried to stand up, I didn't even feel like passing out. I remembered what my grandma had always said "If you don't feel then just go to the beach. You will always feel better"

And then I turned and saw my mom. She was standing there holding my phone. "For being such a sport today," she said, handing it to me.

Yet as she did, a realization hit me, I didn't want my phone back. Being without my phone made me feel free, happy for the first time in my life, and I did not want to back down that road. "It's okay mom" I mumbled, "you can keep it for a little longer."

"What's that?"

She was grinning eye to eye, and at that moment I knew, this was her plan all along. However, I couldn't be mad, because it did work and I was grateful for it.